



How do most fights end in a traditional-based Martial Arts school? Once there is an apparent winner the instructor calls for the participants to stop. They separate, bow to each other, receive a few pointers, and catch their breath by watching the next bout. However, real life is not like that, especially for those in the police and security business. There is no instructor to make both sides stop. The only way the fight is going to stop is when the suspect is subdued. If he or she cannot be subdued then things usually go bad. Even when the person is being taken into custody the fight can flare up again. In fact, most assaults against officers occur at the moment of arrest – when the handcuffs are about to go on. This is the point when the suspect realizes that their freedom is about to be taken from them and their survival instincts take over. Even when a suspect is subdued it is still not over. The suspect may attempt to escape, continue to fight even if restrained, or present new problems to the officers such as positional asphyxiation (a condition where a prisoner dies because those making the arrest have wrongfully positioned the prisoner or have applied continuous pressure beyond the necessary time).

You may be thinking right now, "That's interesting, but what does this have to do with me? I'm just a martial artist. I don't arrest people." The truth is, if you are a martial artist concerned about self-defense it has everything to do with you. In a real life situation you are going to have to face some realities you may not be currently preparing for in your current training. After a real fight ends you're going to have to make some quick decisions as to what to do. Are you going to flee the scene or are you going to force your attacker to remain at the scene until the police or security arrive? If you do decide to hand over the attacker to the authorities, how are you going to do it? What happens if the criminal does not want to wait around for the police? That may not be such a big deal if the fight was minor with little to no injuries, but what about if that same person just brutally stabbed someone you care about or just tore off your ear? Do you want to let them run away, or bring them to justice? As you can see, the end of the fight is only the beginning. The end of any fight is what we call the Post-Conflict phase.

# Police & Security: Arrest & Control





### **Reality-Based Police and Security: Arrest & Control**

You've probably been hearing and seeing in print the term "reality-based" in reference to self-defense techniques and training. If you've been reading Budo International magazine for any number of years you are aware of the term. The Martial Arts in the past five years have split in three separate directions: traditional-based, sport-based, and reality-based. I'm the one that introduced it to the civilian Martial Arts, thanks in large part to publisher Alfredo Tucci, by bringing together my military, corrections, police, and counter-terrorism training under one umbrella; not to mention my over 25 years of diverse Martial Arts training. What sets Reality-Based apart from other systems is that it includes the three components of conflict, whereas most systems (even those calling themselves "reality-based") only have one component. The three components to conflict, be it a heated argument or a major terrorist attack, are Pre-Conflict (events leading up to a conflict), Conflict (the actual tactics and techniques used in a conflict), and Post-Conflict (the necessary actions required after the conflict). Every system today teaches how to strike and block, how to use various weapons, and how to confront a would-be attacker. What they lack is how to deal with important elements before and after a conflict, such as what to do with an attacker after a fight. This is why Budo International and I teamed up to make the new video/DVD Reality-Based Police and Security: Arrest & Control. Not just to give police and security agents the most practical methods in taking someone into custody—although it does just that—but to educate martial artists in training beyond just the Conflict phase they are used to and to integrate Post-Conflict techniques and training methods as well. This article, and the video/DVD just released, will give you the tools you need in dealing with your attacker after the fight - an attacker you will want to bring to justice.

### **Controlling the Suspect**

Whether you are an official wrapping up a fight, or a martial artist who has just defended yourself, you must control the suspect after the fight. How you control the person depends on the circumstances. Regardless of what method you choose to use you need to have a certain demeanor (in the police and security business we call it command presence). Most likely you are dealing with a subject that may still be combative or trying to escape. You

must take control of the situation by using a loud strong voice. You must bark out commands without any hint of fear in your voice. Not only do you use your voice and words as controlling tools, but your eyes and facial expressions must back it up as well. You need to look the subject in the eyes, if you are facing them, and show it in your face that you mean what you say. You've heard it said that the eyes are the window of the soul, and if you show any sense of fear in your eyes the suspect is going to key in on this and take advantage; this is what is known as fear scent. Just like dogs can pick up on when someone is afraid, so do criminals and terrorists. For example, if the suspect is looking at a nearby door as a means of escape you can come on strong, "Don't even think about it. You keep your ass right where it is!" You want to make the subject feel like you will take action, even if you don't intend to. If you have witnesses around, and you give someone a warning in a firm loud voice who is still trying to fight during the subduing stage and you must increase the amount of force to restrain this person, you will have others who





# Sergeant Jim Wagner

Reality Based



will testify that you did indeed give warning and the suspect left you with no choice. As a police officer, I have, on several occasions, had to fight someone and I would yell out, "Stop resisting! Stop resisting!" Those who heard it would later say, "I heard the officer telling the person to stop fighting." Needless to say, such verbal action looks good if the case ever goes to court.

In your current training, do you ever use verbal commands? Do you practice using your "controlling face" to intimidate your opponent? If you don't, you had better start.

Besides using your specific demeanor to control the suspect, you may have to use physical control. The general rule in detaining someone is to

keep a reactionary distance between you and the suspect if you can, especially if you feel that the person may be concealing a weapon or preparing for a secondary attack. Obviously, being armed with a weapon yourself reinforces your message to the suspect that they should stay put until the authorities arrive. Whether it's holding the person there at gun point, knife point, or with a baseball bat high over your head, you must be confident, and willing, to use the weapon if the suspect attacks you. If the criminal starts testing you, and sees that you have no intention of carrying out your threat, that same criminal may end up taking that very weapon from you and using it against you. But, what if you don't have a weapon or your country has stringent

laws in regards to self-defense? There is nothing that says you can't use common objects to protect yourself in a self-defense situation, especially if you fear for your safety or the safety of others. Even in places like England or Ireland where I teach, where self-defense weapons are strictly forbidden, it is perfectly legal to use a common object to defend yourself, though most people there don't know that, and it's not something the police like to publicize. So, if you use an umbrella, a rock, a cane, or whatever, to keep a criminal from fleeing the scene of a crime (provided it was a serious assault), then do so. Even if you have no weapon at all, you can still assume a conflict stance, with your hands balled up in a fist and your knees slightly bent to show that







## Security and Police

you are willing to carry the fight to them if they resist.

We were talking about distance in the last examples, but what happens if you are dealing with a violent person or a "runner"? Obviously, you're going to have to lay hands on them and force them from fighting or leaving. This is a very dangerous situation, and one that police officers and security personnel face regularly. Before you handle anyone, make sure that there are no visible weapons. If you see the handle of a pistol or a knife sticking out of a suspect's waistband as you are approaching or wrestling around with them, you may want to flee the area yourself. Making the arrest at this time may not be the wisest choice. Yet, if you have no choice, and you have to take action, you had better have a plan and stick to it. The first thing you need to do if a weapon is detected is to distract them from that weapon. That may require striking them first before grabbing the weapon. No matter what you do, you have to **WATCH THE HANDS**. It's the hands that will kill you.

### Positioning

Whether you are giving your suspect verbal commands from a distance or are laying hands on them, you must put them into a position that gives you dominance. The best position that gives the greatest disadvantage to the suspect is the prone position (having them lay face down on the ground). If they are willing to listen to your commands these are the orders that you would give (and you can practice them during your training), beginning with the suspect in a standing position:

1. "Get your hands up in the air!" This is so they cannot reach for a weapon. 90% of all concealed weapons are located in the waistband or pockets. Make sure the palms are visible and the suspect is not trying to "cup a weapon".

2. "Spread your feet apart!" This is to make the person less mobile. Technically, the command should be, "Spread your legs apart!" but this was done away with a couple of years back because female suspects were complaining of sexual harassment.

3. "Drop down on right knee. Now,

your left knee!" This puts the suspect into a kneeling position. Now it will be difficult for them to start running. Plus, if they obey to this point, the chances are good that they will obey during the rest of the procedure.

4. "Place your right hand on the ground in front of you!" 80% of the population is right handed. The odds are in your favor that you are isolating his or her weapon hand first.

5. "Place your left hand on the ground in front of you!" Now you have the suspect on all fours. However, they still can easily reach for a weapon, so you need to put them down fast. Watch them carefully.

6. "Keeping your hands on the ground in front of you, slowly start walking backwards with you knees until you are lying on the ground!" As they do this, you can change your position by taking a few steps to the left or right, so if they do suddenly go for a gun you have moved.

7. "Place your arms out like a cross, with your palms up!" You want the suspect's arms out to the sides so they are not near the body where they can grab a weapon. You want to see the palms of their hands and in between their fingers to make sure they are not "palming" a weapon or have some sort of hook ring on that can tear your flesh if they suddenly lunge for you.

8. "Cross your ankles!" If the suspect has a change of heart, and decides to flee, they will have to uncross their ankles first before getting up and this will give you a visual warning.

9. "Look away from me and place your ear on the ground!" You do not want a suspect watching you. At this point you can approach the suspect to put restraints on them or you can maintain this position until help arrives.

10. "Do not move!" Give warnings to the suspect from time to time to let them know that you are the one in control. At this point you may want to call out to other people to help you detain the suspect until the police or security arrive.

The prone position is the best position to place a suspect in, but it may not always be practical due to restricted space, a wet ground, hazards or any number of reasons. The second best controlling position would be the sitting position, followed by the kneeling position. Other controlling positions include a variety of standing positions, but the risk of reoccurring conflict or the opportunity to escape is much greater while the suspect is standing. All of these positions are covered in great detail in my new video/DVD.

### Restraints

Have you ever thought about how you are going to keep someone from punching you or going for a weapon while you are holding them down for the police or security? If you are like most martial artists, you haven't. The worse time to think about it is when it is really happening. Therefore, you need to start training now in what you are going to do. One option is to loosen your belt and tie the suspect's hands with it. Another option is to use a shoe string or the strap of a purse. These are what we would call "improvised restraints". You can fumble around trying to figure out how to tie someone up, or you can always have restraints on you, and you don't have to be a police officer to do it.

I carry small nylon restraints that fit into my change pocket, which when rolled up, are no larger than a Euro dollar coin. I always carry three or four of them in my pocket. They also contain no metal, so they can go through a metal detector without setting them off. That way I can go on a passenger aircraft and be ready should a would-be terrorist try to take over the plane and we get him, or them, down. But, it does not have to be a terrorist. It can be an out of control passenger who starts to do a little air rage. Of course, the restraints are always with me regardless of what kind of suspect I may run into. I carry these restraints on my website [www.jimwagnertraining.com](http://www.jimwagnertraining.com). Even if you choose not to carry commercially made restraints, you can always carry a small travel-size roll of duct tape. Sold in travel sections, these rolls are small and flat. Duct tape is an excellent restraining device, and inexpensive. A word of warning: **NEVER TAPE A SUSPECT'S MOUTH SHUT** no matter how much they may be yelling or offending you. Again, you don't want to run the risk of positional asphyxiation.

### The System for All Systems™

Whether you are a reality-based practitioner or not, knowing how to control and arrest someone after a fight is necessary if you are serious about real self-defense. That is why I use the tag line "The System for All Systems™". One does not have to give up their current system or knowledge base, but one does have to fill in the gaps with reality-based concepts in order to make a complete self-defense program.

Budo International magazine and I will continue to present reality-based concepts in order to better educate practitioners in this "third branch" of the Martial Arts. This includes new video/DVD titles that will be released throughout 2004. ✖

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sergeant Jim Wagner is a police officer in the United States. He is also a former soldier, jailer, SWAT officer, diplomatic bodyguard, and counter-terrorist agent for the U.S. Government. He is also the founder of the reality-based system and teaches seminars worldwide. For more information visit [www.jimwagnertraining.com](http://www.jimwagnertraining.com)





## The Reality-Based Front Kick

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**T**he front kick may be the most effective leg strike in the world. It is certainly the one I've used the most throughout my law-enforcement career whenever I was forced to subdue criminals. It's simple and powerful, but only if you execute it correctly. To do so, you must adhere to three important reality-based principles.

**Technique Train:** This term does not refer to a locomotive, but to a series of steps for properly performing a technique. A front

kick against a hostile target requires the following train:

- **Imminent-conflict position** ("fighting stance"). Your body is in a bladed position with your feet as wide as your shoulders and your weight distributed equally.
- **Rear-leg delivery.** Your back leg is your striking leg. It can deliver more power than your front leg because of the distance your foot travels.
- **Strike and recovery.** Raise your knee until your thigh is horizontal, then thrust the ball or sole of your foot through the target. Allow your supporting knee to bend slightly to absorb the impact of the blow. Retract your leg and place

your foot back on the ground. Your foot should move out and back like a piston in an engine.

**Stopping Power:** In police and military circles, there's an ongoing debate about the stopping power of different caliber weapons. Using a smaller caliber (lighter bullet propelled by a reduced load of gunpowder) means you sacrifice your ability to stop an aggressor, yet you can carry more ammunition in each magazine. On the other hand, using a big, heavy bullet with a greater load results in more stopping power, but you end up with reduced magazine capacity.

Practitioners of the reality-based martial arts also refer to stopping power, but it's in the context of strikes. We believe it's better to hit your opponent one or two times with as much power as possible, rather than many times with weaker blows. Both methods can definitely inflict injury, but most people would prefer to be shot by a 9mm round, which may not kill them, than by a beefier .45-caliber round, which tends to rip off anything it strikes.

Most martial artists know that power is paramount, but not everyone applies that knowledge during full-contact training or heavy-bag work. The old adage, "You fight as you train," will rear

*The front-leg strike should be executed as though you were trying to kick open a locked door, says Jim Wagner.*

PHOTO BY RICK MUSTEAD







Bill Kim (right) delivers a front thrust kick into a kicking shield during a Level 1 Instructor Certification course in Vancouver, Canada

its head in a real conflict, where those who are used to kicking and punching hard and accurately will possess real stopping power. Meanwhile, those who aim only to maximize their speed will possess less of it.

To teach people how to generate as much stopping power as possible, I stand them in front of a locked door and tell them to prepare to kick it open. Needless to say, none of them starts by chambering his lead leg. They all get into a good stance and prepare to use their rear leg. Kicking a hostile human is no different.

**Target acquisition:** In reality-based systems, high kicks do not exist. It's that simple. Therefore, the primary target for a front-leg strike is the pelvic region. It's your opponent's center of gravity, it doesn't have any natural protection and it's difficult to block because of the low angle of attack.

Don't just hit the target, however. Strive to penetrate it. Drive your foot through his body and deliver your power to his tailbone.

Although the reality-based martial arts contain five kicks, the front-leg strike is the easiest and most powerful to deploy in a high-risk situation. If you learn it well, you'll have an effective weapon committed to muscle memory, and that's something you can always depend on. **✦**

*About the author: Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a teacher of civilian Reality-Based Personal Protection. For more information, visit <http://www.jimwagnertraining.com>.*

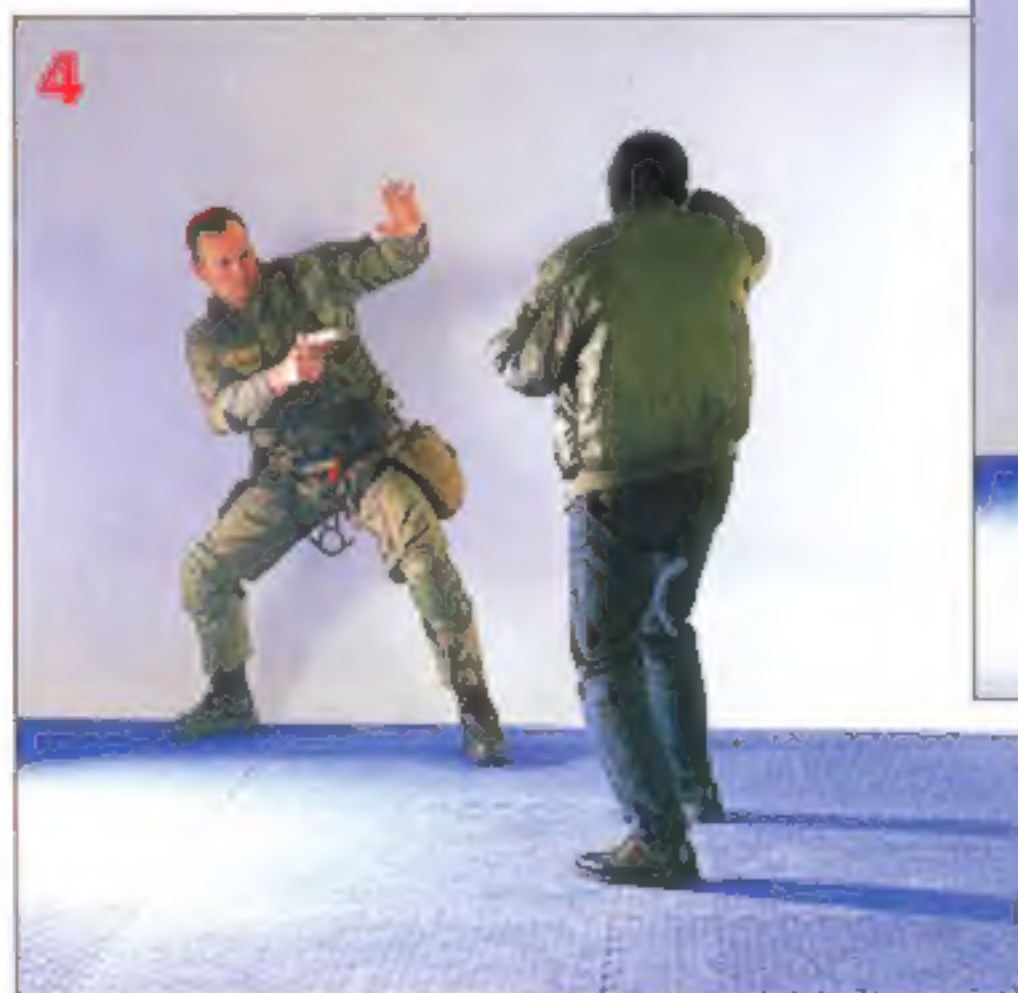
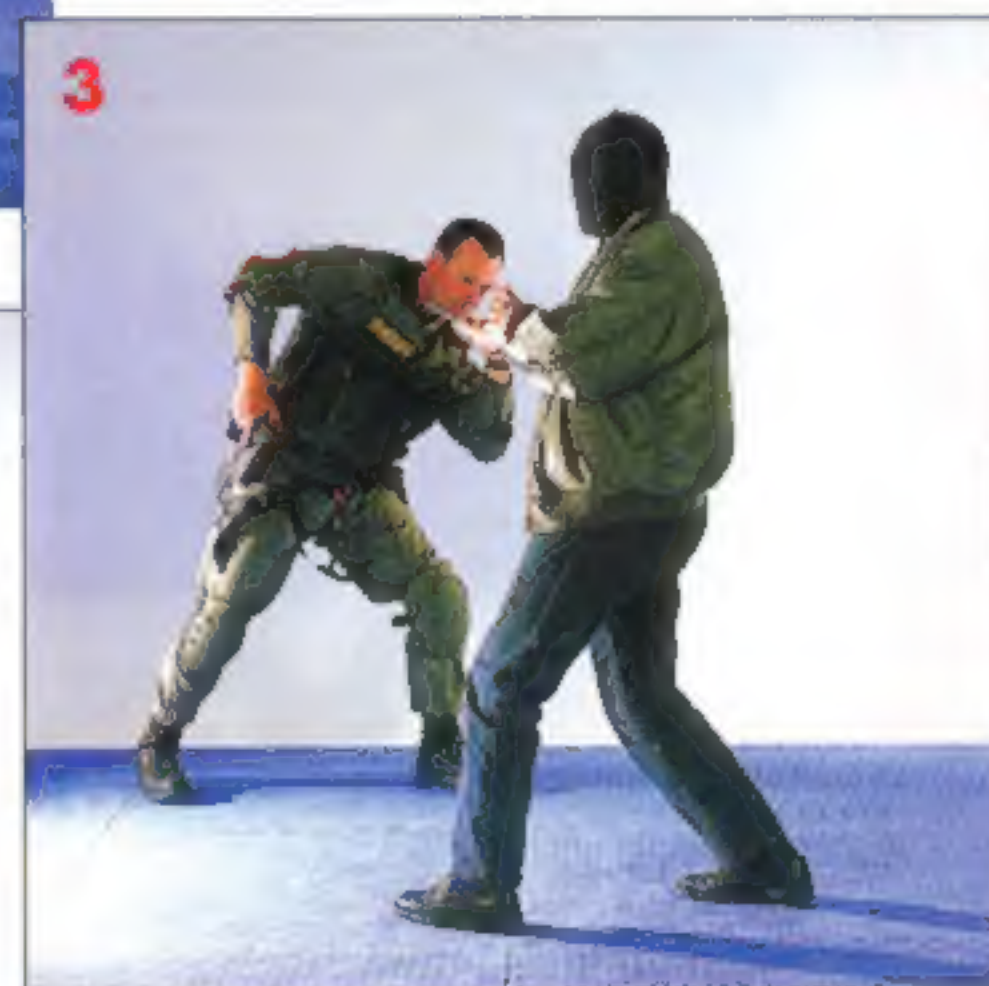


Andy Suitella (top left) launches a front thrust into the head of a student who is learning how to survive a ground attack by multiple suspects



# Knife Defense

Jim Wagner



1. Jim weist den Angreifer an, inne zu halten...
2. doch dieser greift mit dem Messer zur Bauchgegend an, Jim blockt den Angriff...
3. und zieht seine Pistole...
4. geht einen Schritt zurück und schießt.





# Police and Military KNIFE DEFENSE

Thousands and thousands of lines have been written about defense against knives in the world of experts on real combat. Sergeant Jim Wagner is without doubt one of the most important top experts in the world on real defense. He has taught the most important security and intervention corps all over the world, such as the German GSG9, the Yamam of Israel, the Brazilian GATE, in Spain the Special Operation Unit of the "Legion", the British TSG, Argentina's Special Forces, the FBI SWAT, the US Marshals SOG, the North American DEA, the US Navy SEALs, as well as the US Army Special Forces, etc...

His curriculum is impressive and on his European tour it was well honored. The European media such as the Spanish newspaper "El Pais" and different Spanish TV stations as well as others from Great Britain and France broadcasted the event. Unfortunately, the topic of citizens' safety is at an alarming level in the developed countries. Jim does not teach how to attack with a knife, but how to defend yourself following some simple and effective principles; he found himself being attacked by knives on two occasions. The techniques and principles that he teaches are not the usual sophisticated ones seen at times, but rather formulas that offer simple solutions, that of surviving and neutralizing the aggressor in the most secure and economic way possible. Throughout history, those Martial Arts that have always been developing real defense and attack techniques are now taking advantage of the techniques developed by specialists who face delinquents in the street. The video that we have recorded with Sergeant Wagner is a master lesson reflecting the other side of reality, the street, rough and tough. This martial piece will definitely have many who thought they knew it all talking...Jim will show you how he performed in front of the professionals of Europe, and if they do not follow his steps, they will simply be...dead.







# Self Defense

## Police and Military Knife Defense

In the world of the police and military we have an expression we use to describe the essence of our training – it's called "reality-based" training. The expression implies exactly that – training which prepares combatants for probable conflicts based upon current social/technological realities. Such training not only includes practical and effective fighting techniques, but equal emphasis is also placed on the "totality of circumstances," (this includes the clothes and equipment a combatant will be fighting in, the battle terrain, preparation leading up to a conflict, and post-conflict management – subjects which will be covered in upcoming articles).

One example of reality-based training is a course that I created, and teach, called Police and Military Knife Defense (offered through the training organization Jim Wagner Training [www.jimwagnertraining.com](http://www.jimwagnertraining.com)).

This course, specifically designed for law enforcement and military personnel to survive close range knife attacks, has gained worldwide respect and acceptance. The personnel who have been through this course reads like the Who's who of the Special Operations world: the German counter-terrorist team GSG9, the defensive tactics instructors of the Grenzschutzschule (German Federal Border Police), trainers of the Helsinki Police Department, tactics instructors of the Spanish Foreign Legion (Operaciones Especiales), Brazilian G.A.T.E. (Grupo de Ações Táticas Especiais), FBI SWAT, Israeli Mishtara, London Metropolitan Police TSG, US Marshals SOG, DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Argentinean Special Forces, US Secret Service, and the list goes on – 500 more agencies to be exact.

So what makes the Police and Military Knife Defense course any different than those civilian martial arts courses that also include knife defense? For starters, the very first exercise makes it different.

### The first 10 minutes

Whether I'm instructing the course, or one of the many qualified Reality Instructors (Investigator Joanna Clark, Constable Dave Shorter, Chris St-Jacques, Deputy James Proulx, Johan Lai, Sean Proud, Steve Johnson, Rich Dawson, Elizabeth Greenman, James Yankowsky, Brett Halem, and many others) all students start by wearing the equipment that they will be wearing in a real situation (duty belt, weapons, shoes or boots, etc.). Next, a scenario (role playing situation) is explained to the selected student; a scenario which



they could possibly face in the future based upon their current duty assignment (be it patrol, investigations, special operations, or even peace keeping). Then the "suspect" (the instructor to start with) is armed with a rubber training knife that is concealed in a pocket, inside the waistband or in some other easy-to-get spot.

When the scenario begins, the student approaches the suspect in a typical low-risk fashion. The student walks up to the suspect according to their unit's policies and procedures. Based upon the scenario they will either ask the suspect questions, search him for weapons, or even make an arrest.

When the student is within "interrogation distance," approximately 1 to 2 meters away, the attack is launched at full speed and at full contact. Of course, prior to the scenario, the student is advised that they can do whatever they want to do in order to survive: kick,

punch, push, draw a weapon (a safe training weapon), or escape.

Once an attack is launched, 95% of the students are "critically" or "fatally injured" with the knife within the first three seconds of the assault – before they even have time to pull their own weapon. Although those with a martial arts background tend to survive a second or two longer, they too, statistically, fare no better than the untrained during a knife attack. This is true whether the instructor is the attacker or fellow students.

After several demonstrations, and one student after another is cut down (even when they know the attack is coming), the students soon realize just how deadly knife attacks really are. No longer are people joking like they did before class, "Don't come to a gun fight with a knife, ha! ha!" They find that at close range the knife is an unbeatable weapon to those without proper training.





## A real eye opener

After the first 10 minutes of the course all of students acknowledge that, "it's a real eye opener," and know that they will be learning things that will save their lives. Once a student has a taste of what a real knife attack is like (the average knife attack is over within five seconds once the weapon is deployed) then the instructor himself assumes the role of "victim" to show that the situation is indeed survivable.

The instructor selects a student at random (usually the most aggressive person in the class to prove a point), and instructs the student to make the attack in any fashion they desire, but it has to be at full speed and full contact. In the classes I teach I always tell the selected student, "Do whatever you want. Just try to kill me as if this were real life." This usually makes it more realistic for me because the student wants to look good in front of his peers, and of course they always want to beat the instructor at his own game. Which brings us to a very important point. Most, not all, traditional martial arts instructors would never take this approach because it is too unpredictable giving a student no limits to keep coming at you until they either succeed or are put down. From what I have observed in my 25 years in the martial arts, practicing dozens of styles, is that most civilian instructors tell their student in such knife demonstrations, "Come at me like this, or like that..." Of course, when the instructor knows what angle the attack is going to come from it greatly reduces the potential for failure. Plus, instructing a student to come at you like a drug-crazed killer or a highly motivated terrorist trying to stitch you up like a sewing machine tends to invalidate most traditional knife defense techniques. Giving students, or training partners, the freedom to come at you however they please is the pure essence of reality-based training. As the receiver, it invokes actual responses one would parallel in a real confrontation.

Now, back to the exercise. When the student finally launches the knife attack at the instructor the class is quite surprised at the instructor's ability to survive the encounter. What surprises students even more is that after this one-day course they too increase their ability to survive a knife attack by 50% or more. The following paragraphs will outline the secrets of this course, and will also help you survive a close range knife attack.

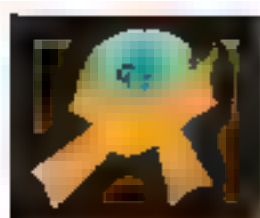
## Based on human instincts

The problem with the way most civilian martial arts instructors teach knife defense (for self-defense situations) is that they go contrary to human instincts.

Let me ask you a question. If somebody was next to you and threw a beer







# Real Combat

bottle at you as hard as they could, what would you instinctively do? You would immediately put your hands up in front of you to block the flying object. If the attacker stepped toward you at the same time he threw the bottle you also would step back or lean away while keeping your hands up. This is what everyone does. I have observed this exact reaction in thousands of students across the world.

The same is true when I come in at full speed with a rubber knife. The first thing the student does is put up their hands (not in a well coordinated fashion, but in an automatic fear reaction), and they lean away from the attack. Like I mentioned before, those students with some martial arts training will often times try to block, punch, kick, or even attempt a knife disarm, but they too are rapidly defeated and "critically injured" with the blade. In a real-life situation, even if a punch or kick happens to hit its target, a determined attacker will gladly sacrifice a broken nose, jaw, or limb if it means slaying his opponent.

Thus, the question is, why go against human instinct? In a knife fight DISTANCE IS YOUR FRIEND (provided that you do have some distance). Whether it is in a training session or a real conflict on the streets, if an attacker comes at you with a knife you will inevitably put up your hands and step back – so go with it. You won't override your natural instincts. Thus, you have to make your first instincts a part of your training if you want to be prepared for real-life attacks. When someone comes at you with a knife, and you have room behind you, put your hands up and step back.

## The Tactical "L"

Most untrained military or police personnel will continue to retreat backwards in a straight line. I've seen some go back in a straight line as far as 7 to 8 meters. However, it does not take long until the attacker catches up with you and outmaneuvers you. Although your instincts will dictate that you will step back at the beginning of the attack, your training must take over once your decision-making abilities take over.

Once you realize that the attacker is pursuing you, and you feel yourself retreating backwards to avoid getting stabbed or cut, you must suddenly make a conscious decision to step to the right or to the left so the attacker moves past you. This sudden "pause in combat" will buy you a half or a full second of time. This movement, the side step, is known as the Tactical "L." This extra second that it takes for the attacker to change directions is hopefully enough time to deploy your own weapon if you have one, or strike an incapacitating blow (such as a knee kick

or eye gouge for real situations) if you are unarmed.

If you are unable to get your weapon out after performing the Tactical "L" or your empty hand strike is ineffective, then you will have to "recycle" and do the maneuver over again if the attacker keeps coming at you with the knife.

## Move and Escape

Once you have gained some distance between you and the attacker you will need to do one of two things. One, if you are a police officer or a soldier and the attacker continues to assault you or another person near by, you will have no choice but to use your most potent weapon against him (if you're a constable in the United Kingdom your strongest weapon would probably be your baton, while in the USA, Spain, France, Russia, etc., it would be your firearm). You will continue to use your weapon until the



threat has stopped. During the attack you will keep moving away, striking, and moving. Do not be a stationary target. Always look for a safer area. Again, distance is a key factor in survival. Even a severely wounded attacker is capable of pursuing you and landing a fatal blow before they go down.

On the other hand, if you are unarmed (such as custodial situation in a facility), the best course of action once you've done the Tactical "L" is to immediately escape. If you have the room, do not try to wrestle the weapon away from the attacker.

## Knife Disarms

Obviously there will be those situations where distance is not an option – someone has you pinned up against your car or a wall, you are in a confined area (such as a small bedroom or booking cage), or you cannot move back because there are people behind you (such as in a SWAT situation or you are protecting a loved one).

In traditional martial arts, and even in many of today's police and military training (those systems which cling to traditional methods), the method for disarming a knife from an aggressive subject is very complicated and extremely suicidal.

The way that most fighting systems teach knife disarms is to have a set of techniques for every conceivable angle of attack. As it stands, one would have to master approximately 25 to 50 techniques to effectively handle any attack. In addition, the way the disarm techniques are designed, one would assume that the attacker is going to have his arm completely extended and hold it out there for a moment so that you can grab it. In real life it does not work that way.

A real knife attacker is thinking multiple stabs and slashes, not just one. And since most people train for the exaggerated slow attack, they forget their knife disarm techniques under stress and fear (both in simulated combat and the real thing). Once the attack is fast and furious most students are totally lost because of "sensory overload conditions." Their training has not prepared them for the way most criminals handle a knife.

Years ago I used to teach knife disarms just like everybody else. I had the perfect disarm for every occasion. However, under full speed, full contact conditions (not to mention uncooperative partners) the techniques always fell apart. By the time you tried to do the knife disarm, the attacker already switched angles and was going for another target. Then, one day when I was training members of the Canadian army the answer finally came to me. The result was the "Jim Wagner Knife Disarm Rule."

## The Jim Wagner Knife Disarm Rule

The rule to disarming a knife from an attacker has only four simple steps. The first and last rule is based on human instinct. They are:

1. Grab
2. Close
3. Take down
4. Escape

### Rule One

**Grab** If someone tossed you a baseball or a tea cup you would instinctively catch it without even thinking about it. Likewise, you will also attempt to catch the knife hand of the attacker at extremely close range (within touching distance) to prevent the weapon from penetrating your body.

To practice the grab simply have your training partner repeatedly try to "stab or slash" you on different body targets (note: eye protection for this exercise is recommended). Each time the weapon comes at you just try to grab the knife hand with both of your hands. Don't be frustrated if your hands do not end up in





a perfect grip, because this is going to happen in real life as well. Your job is just to try to grab on the best you can.

Also, you may end up getting "injured" when you fail to grab on. However, you must always accept the fact that **YOU WILL GET CUT** in a real knife fight. Since your "back is against the wall" in this exercise, you have no choice but to grab onto the hand when you are able. It may take a few tries, but once you have it, do not let go. You then go immediately into the next move.

## Rule Two:

**Close** Once you have grabbed onto the weapon hand you must immediately close the gap. You must "crowd" the attacker in order to prevent him from pulling the knife from your grasp, or allow him the space required to stab or slash.

It is true that you can cut yourself, or even possibly stab yourself, but if you do not move in, the attacker will do worse damage. If you are able to avoid moving right on top of the knife, at the worst, you will only get superficial injuries from rubbing up against the blade.

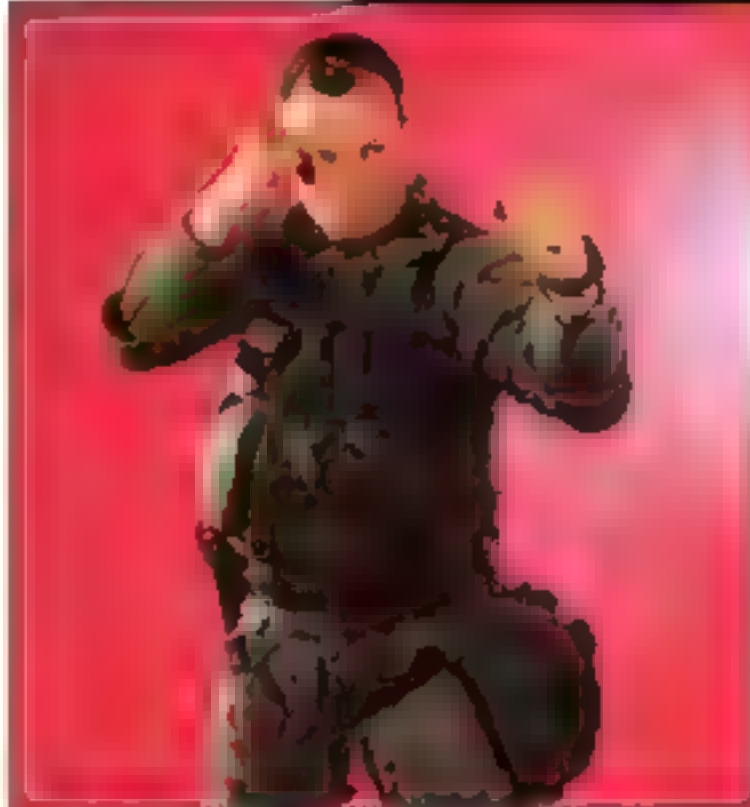
When you move in you should have your body pressed against the attacker's body. There should be no room for him to maneuver. Because you have taken away his fighting space he will have to do one of two things: try to pull back, or try to push you off. Before he has a chance to do either you will immediately move into Rule Three.

## Rule Three:

**Takedown** Now that you have control of the knife hand, your body is pressed up against the attackers, you must now get the attacker off balance. How you do this will depend upon your body position and his.

Without ever letting go of the enemy's hand with both of your own, use your forearms, shoulders, knees, sweeps, or whatever it takes to get the suspect to the ground. This is where your prior judo or jiu jitsu training will come in handy. However, avoid turning your back on the attacker at all cost when taking him down. To end up in a wrestling match on the ground with a knife wielding suspect will most likely end up bad.

Although I recommend a takedown to the ground, a takedown may not be pos-



sible. Therefore, the next best option would be to simply try to get the suspect off balance and take advantage and escape – which brings us to the next rule.

## Rule Four: Escape

Once the suspect is off balance or is on the ground you must get away from him. Remember the golden rule in a knife fight - **DISTANCE IS YOUR FRIEND**. Regardless of whether you are armed with a weapon or not, you are still vulnerable to a secondary attack if you are anywhere within a 7 meter (21 feet) radius of the suspect.


Once you have distance, and you are armed, warn the suspect to stay on the ground and to drop the knife. If he refuses to comply, do not get lured into his trap and get any closer. In fact, such a refusal to submit should be a warning to you to look for even more distance to guarantee your own safety.

If, on the other hand, you were able to get away from the attacker, and you are unarmed, the best course of action is to immediately escape to a safe zone. To practice this in a training environment simply select an area and run to it after the takedown.

If escape is not possible due to circumstances, then you will have no

choice but to stay and fight once you takedown the suspect. Since your opponent is still likely to possess the knife, your attack must be hard and fast, guaranteeing victory. Then the weapons must be stripped from the attacker's hand. Even if the suspect is severely wounded, or dead for that matter (police and military tactical teams are trained to take weapons even from bodies because you never know if "they will come to life"), you must get the knife into your possession.

## Final advice

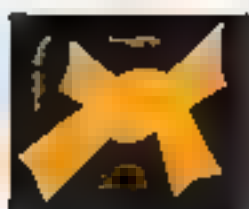
Fighting with knives is a very risky undertaking; I know because I have been attacked twice at close range, and been threatened several times at longer ranges. Plus, having trained thousands of police officers and military personnel, and having interviewed many who have survived knife attacks, the advice I have laid out is the same advice anyone who has experienced a real attack would tell you. Therefore, when you are doing your knife training you need to follow the guidelines I have set forth in this article. If you do, then your training will indeed be reality-based. 

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Sergeant Jim Wagner is a 12-year veteran of law enforcement in California, USA. Past assignments include: custody officer, street patrol, bicycle patrol, SWAT, Search & Rescue, patrol supervisor. Currently Sgt. Wagner is assigned to his department's Dignitary Protection Unit.*

*Sgt. Wagner is an instructor for the training organization Jim Wagner Training and trains law enforcement and military personnel globally. If you have any comments, or your agency would like to set up some training, you may contact Sgt. Wagner directly by E-mail at [info@jimwagnertraining.com](mailto:info@jimwagnertraining.com)*





# **SERGEANT JIM WAGNER**

## **SELF DEFENSE IN THE SKIES**

Many things have changed since September 11th, this indeed includes the concept of security on planes. The rules for taking action when confronting a hijack are no longer "collaborators of the hijackers". Each passenger is a potential soldier in this war and should be trained to take care of himself and help others. Jim Wagner, a well-known expert by our readers has reflected on this point from many angles. If you want to know what are your possibilities and how to react confronting an attack against your life, do not miss this magnificent article.







In the 1970's Arab terrorists wanted to humiliate and destroy Israel. War did not accomplish this, so the next best way was terrorism. However, the terrorists soon found that hijacking Israeli airplanes was not an easy task. The Israelis made their airplanes "hard targets" and were considered the most secure aircraft in the free world. Therefore, the terrorists chose "soft targets" – American and European passenger aircraft. The 70's and 80's was the era of hijackings.

In the past, the terrorists would seize an aircraft, force it down in a sympathizing country, make demands (for free passage or the release of imprisoned fellow terrorists), then usually release the hostages after receiving adequate media attention. Back then no terrorist thought of flying an aircraft into a building.

Then, on September 11, 2001 a new form of terrorism emerged on the world scene. Again, the terrorists had their sights on attacking Israel, but Israeli security was too tight. Therefore, the terrorists chose a "soft target" – American passenger aircraft. Only this time there would be no negotiations, and no releasing of hostages. It was a barbaric new form of terrorism – the suicide airplane. Not only was it the most horrific act of terrorism in history, costing over 6,000 lives, but also it was also the most dramatic martial arts story of the new millennium.

What was the reason for the attacks? On October 8, 2001, during the American and British bombing of terrorists camps in Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, released a video tape of himself declaring that the terrorist attacks of September 11 were the result of the United States supporting Israel.

### **Knife fight in the sky**

On September 11, 2001 four American civilian aircraft were taken over by Arab terrorists who were armed with knives and box cutters. The first airplane, American Airlines Flight 11, crashed into New York's World Trade Center's north tower. Eighteen minutes later a second airplane, United Airlines Flight 175, slammed into the south tower. Then the boldest act of terrorism of them all occurred. The center of American military might, the Pentagon building (just outside of Washington D.C.) was partially destroyed by American Airlines Flight 77.

There was a fourth airplane that was hijacked, United Airlines Flight 93, which never made it to its intended "target." U.S. Intelligence sources believe that this airplane was heading toward the White House (the residence



*Just as is taught by the experts, we have recreated with Jim Wagner the small space in which the fight has to take place within a plane. The battle field is very narrow and we have to train to understand how to take advantage of this area (the use of the knife is limited because of the seats, that act as shields) or with the weapons we have: a simple little packet of sugar (see the photos on the page before) or a bottle (photo above these lines).*

of the President) or possibly the Capital building down the street (the very seat of the United States government). The terrorists did not succeed, because a few passengers decided to fight back. They fought against the knives.

When President George W. Bush addressed the U.S. Congress a week after the attack, he named passenger Todd Beamer as a genuine American hero. Beamer phoned his wife from Flight 93 during the hijacking and she told him about the incidents in New York and Washington D.C. He knew that the same fate awaited him and the other passengers. With this information in mind he told his wife, Lisa Beamer, that he and other passengers were going to attempt to take the airplane back. Other male passengers (people like Tom Burnett, Jeremy Glick, and Mark Bringham) called their families from air phones and told them the same thing – they were going to fight back, and try to take the airplane back.

### **What if it were you?**

If we have learned anything from history, it's that terrorists will repeat "successful" acts of terror. The recent attacks in America achieved the effect that the terrorists wanted: it showed that buildings are vulnerable to suicide flights, innocent people are easy targets, it slowed down the economy, and it produced fear (which quickly turned into righteous anger). Therefore, similar attacks are inevitable.

The question now is, "What about if the airplane you are on next time gets hijacked? Are you better prepared than the terrorists, and do you know how to fight back?"

As a member of an elite law enforcement team in the United States, and an active police/military trainer for counter-terrorists teams across the globe, I am unable to divulge sensitive counter-terrorist techniques, but I can provide you with practical advice on things you can do as a martial artist, based upon my experience, which you can use in the un-





*The American flag in black on khaki is the symbol of all the anti-terrorists units used during liberty/freedom operation since the 11th of September.*

bied easily). You can add push carts, and have other students play the roles of passengers.

### **Training equipment**

The hijackers that took over flights 11, 175, 77 and 93 were armed with knives and box cutters, but keep in mind that some hijackings also involve guns. As martial artists we already practice with training knives and guns (rubber, wood or plastic replicas). These training tools are also excellent for learning to defeat hijackers.

To make your training more realistic (referred to as reality-based training by American police) all participants should wear the clothes that they would actually fight in. The "terrorists" should be wearing normal street clothes, in addition to protective equipment for contact, and the "victims" should be wearing travel clothes. The more realistic the training equipment, the more real the training will feel.

### **Before the hijacking**

In real situations, and in training as well, you want to always anticipate possible problems and prepare for them. Here are several suggestions of pre-conflict preparation:

1. Request an exit seat. Whether you select your seat by e-ticket or at the airline ticket counter, always try to request an exit seat over the wing, unless you are flying First Class. This is not only the strongest part of the airplane in case of a crash landing, but the wing is situated in the middle of the "tube." If trouble begins in the front or the back of the aircraft you will be able to react to it faster.

2. Always select an aisle seat. You do not want to be seated next to a window or in between people. You do not want to have to climb over anybody in the event of an emergency. Always choose an aisle seat so you can get up, or escape quickly.

3. Bring handcuffs. Although metal handcuffs are not allowed on passenger aircraft, you can bring alternative restraining devices in case you have to "arrest" someone (plumbers plastic tie straps, shoestring, duct tape, etc.)

4. Observe suspicious passengers. Without looking obvious, or nervous yourself, always look for suspicious passengers. Do not assume that the next attack will be from Arab terrorists. Terrorists can be of any sex, race, or background. Rather, you should look for suspicious behavior patterns: nervous, scared, angry, or very focused. Look around for anyone making hand signals to other passengers.

5. Wear fighting clothes. Wear appropriate clothes for a fight, such as loose

fitting clothes, long pants, and a good pair of shoes for kicking, running or stomping.

### **During the hijacking**

If, in the future, you ever become a victim in a hijacking there are no longer any guarantees that you will survive the incident. The hijackers may be from the "old school" and try to negotiate, or they may be of the "new school" and have plans to crash the aircraft into a building - with you in it. There is simply no way to know what the intentions of the terrorists will be since the "rules" have changed after September 11, 2001.

If you do decide to fight aboard an aircraft, here are some tactics and techniques that may help save your life and the life of others.

1. Ambush the ambushers. When a criminal or a terrorist first jumps up from their seat to seize the aircraft they will be loud and violent in order to intimidate the passengers and flight crew. By doing this tactic the terrorists hope to control the aircraft as soon as possible through fear. Once they have control of the aircraft it is more difficult for the passengers and crew to resist or to counter-attack. In military operations soldiers are taught to attack the attacker if they are ambushed instead of staying in the "kill zone" where the attacker has the advantage. This move puts the attackers on the defensive, which can possibly stop the ambush.

2. Take command. Every police officer in the United States learns about "command presence." It means that you control a situation with your appearance (confident look), verbal authority (strong verbal commands to other passengers ordering them to assist you), and commitment (certainty about your mission, which will influence others to follow).

3. Linear kicks. The seats of aircraft are taller than a dining room chair, and the aisle between the rows of seats are narrow (about the width of the average adult forearm to forearm). Therefore, you will be restricted to front kicks and straight knee strikes. Round kicks, side kicks, or any type of spinning kicks are prohibitive. Your target should be a well-placed front kick or knee strike to the pelvic area. This target is a person's center of gravity (COG), and a forceful strike will "stop or drop" most people. Do not do high kicks (above the pelvic area) or weak snap kicks.

4. Keep it simple. Use only simple hard hitting, closed-fist punches and devastating elbow strikes. If you do use open-hand techniques they should be to vital areas (eyes, throat, and neck).

5. Use a shield. On Flights 11, 175, 77 and 93 the hijackers were armed with knives and box cutters. Although airport security has improved since September,

### **A police & military perspective**

The type of fighting that police and military special operations teams do inside aircraft is called tubular assault. This term refers to any linear assault, and also applies to buses and trains. In other words, movement and action conducted in a narrow passage way. To fight in this environment requires special training and considerations.

Before I go into the various fighting techniques used aboard aircraft, you must remember that there are three phases to combat: 1. Pre-conflict, 2. Conflict, 3. Post-conflict. Most martial arts training focuses on the actual conflict (the punching and kicking), but they fail to train in pre-conflict (preparations before a conflict), and what to do immediately after (post-conflict). It is important that we cover all three phases when training for aircraft situations.

### **The training environment**

The ideal training environment is to actually train aboard a passenger aircraft, but unless you are on an elite police or military team that specializes in Aircraft Interdiction, this will not be possible. However, you can create your own "aircraft" for training purposes.

When I was down in Brazil last year training the Air Force's Special Forces team GEPA, we did nothing more than set up chairs and drew an outline of the airplane with chalk in an aircraft hanger. You can do the same thing to practice your techniques and to understand the spatial "feel" for this type of environment. Of course my Brazilian students later practiced their techniques on an actual aircraft with Varig Brasil Airlines, but they knew what to do inside the aircraft prior to boarding based upon our simple training model.

If you wish to be more elaborate, you can even build yourself a small section of "aircraft" with walls made of wooden boards and plastic sheets (something which can be assembled and disassembled

likely event that you become a victim like those people of Flight 93.



it is still possible for someone to conceal cutting and stabbing items on an aircraft, such as composite plastic knives, which cannot be detected by metal detectors. The only way to assure that nobody carries any weapons aboard an aircraft is to forbid all carry-on items, issue all passengers a jumpsuit, frisk them, then have them go through a Backscatter X-ray scan (a machine that can look through a person's clothes, and produces images which are very revealing). Therefore, if you find that your hijackers have knives, you need to make a shield to protect yourself out of a jacket wrapped around your arm, a briefcase, purse or even a rolled up flight magazine. A shield will protect you from stabs and slashes.

6. Improvised weapons. I am not advising you to bring weapons aboard any aircraft (it's against the law), but you need to think of items that you can use as a weapon in the event of a hijacking. I can think of several "improvised weapons," such as a belt

with a large belt buckle (flexible weapon), a metal writing pen (stabbing weapon), a cowboy boot or air phone (impact weapon), an unopened can of Coke (throwing weapon), a handful of sugar, salt and pepper (distraction weapon) etc. The airlines may prevent you from carrying knives or other edged weapons on their aircraft, but they can't take away everything – especially your warrior spirit. As the U.S. Marine Close Combat instructors say – One mind, any weapon.

7. Use your environment. The free access areas in an aircraft are quite limited even in large aircraft such as the Boeing 747. Your fighting area will be very small, such as in an aisle, near a toilet, or by an emergency exit. Therefore, you must train in confined areas to know what techniques work and which do not. You must also learn to use your environment to your tactical advantage: brace yourself against seats for balance, shove the terrorist's head into the overhead baggage rack, or push a terrorist between the seats and try to pin him there. Again, the only way to understand all of your options in an aircraft is to create your own "aircraft" using the same measurements.

8. Make the arrest. You must not make the mistake of thinking that all future hijackings will be like those of September



11th. You may be facing an army of hijackers or a single suspect who is mentally disturbed. If you do happen to subdue a hijacker, what are you going to do with him, or them? One of the most overlooked areas of conflict by traditional martial artists is the post-conflict phase. Although the immediate danger may be over, there are still other factors to consider – such as arresting those who you have defeated. Are you going to just sit on him the rest of the flight or do you have restraining devices? I personally carry nylon handcuffs (which are carried by many of today's counter-terrorist teams) aboard each flight that I take. However, you can also use shoelaces, duct tape, a belt, torn strips of a shirt, etc. The important thing is to incorporate arrest and control techniques into your training just as you would ground fighting or weapons training.

9. Carry a "go bag." When I fly commercially I always have a small carry-on bag that I store under the seat in front of me. I can quickly place the shoulder strap over my shoulder and go with it if I need it in any type of emergency (whether a plane crash or a fight), that's why it is called a "go bag" – it's always ready to go. Inside my bag I have the following items: first aid kit, flashlight, wa-

ter, food (protein bars), whistle, flexible handcuffs, smoke hood, and something I can use as a weapon (I will keep that to myself). I also put in some business papers to disguise its true purpose.

10. Team tactics. If you are traveling with someone, it is a good idea to discuss a plan of action together, such as roles and responsibilities, should a hijacking take place. Being prepared beforehand is much better tactically, then having to come up with a hasty plan at the moment of the conflict. Come up with key alert words (such as "Okay, I am your prisoner" indicates to your partner to start fighting in 5 seconds). Also discuss hand signals and the type of techniques you would use in various situations. Discuss these things quietly since you may be sitting next to a terrorist, and would not want to be overheard.

### ***Train hard, fight easy***

Ever since September 11th, I have heard many martial artists say, "If it happened to me, I would fight back. Nobody is going to crash me into a building if I can help it." That's a good attitude to have as a martial artist, but do you really know what you will be up against? When the day comes for you to act on your





# SERGEANT JIM WAGNER

words, will your martial arts training have been sufficient enough to have prepared you for a real-world fight? Not just physically, but mentally as well? After all, 90% of combat is mental. Have you ever had to fight for your life before? Do you know how it feels to have adrenaline surge through your body, to get "tunnel vision," and to rely upon gross motor skills?

The key to good combat conditioning is to train harder than your enemy. In the case of the American hijackings, the enemy (the terrorists) were devoted to their training. Hijacker Jarrah is a good case in point.

Ziad Samir Jarrah, the terrorist pilot of United Airlines Flight 93, was studying knife fighting and other martial arts techniques prior to his "mission." His American instructor Bert Rodriguez (owner of US-1 Fitness Centers) said that Jarrah was a "poite," "dedicated" and a "good student." He also attended terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, probably near Kandahar, Khowst or Jalalabad. Of course, Jarrah proved that he was willing to fight to the death. Thus, when you're practicing your techniques, remember that they may be used one day against someone like Jarrah.

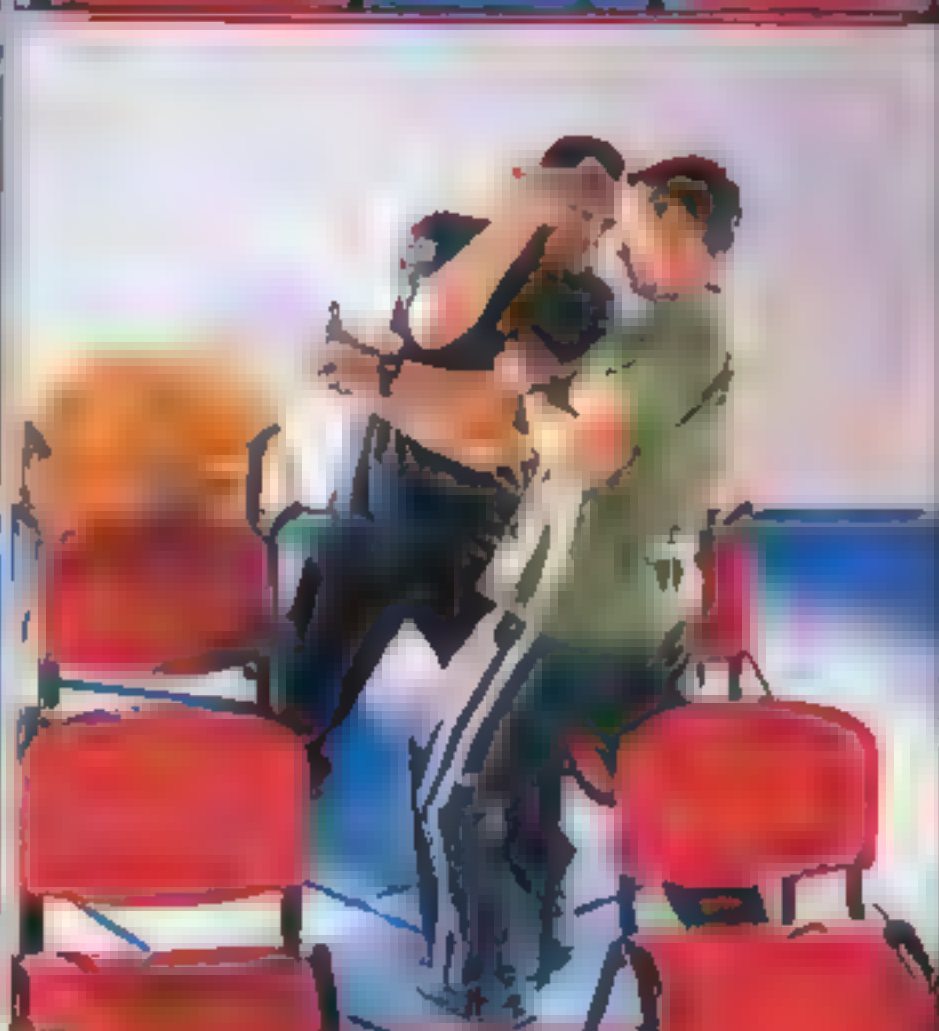
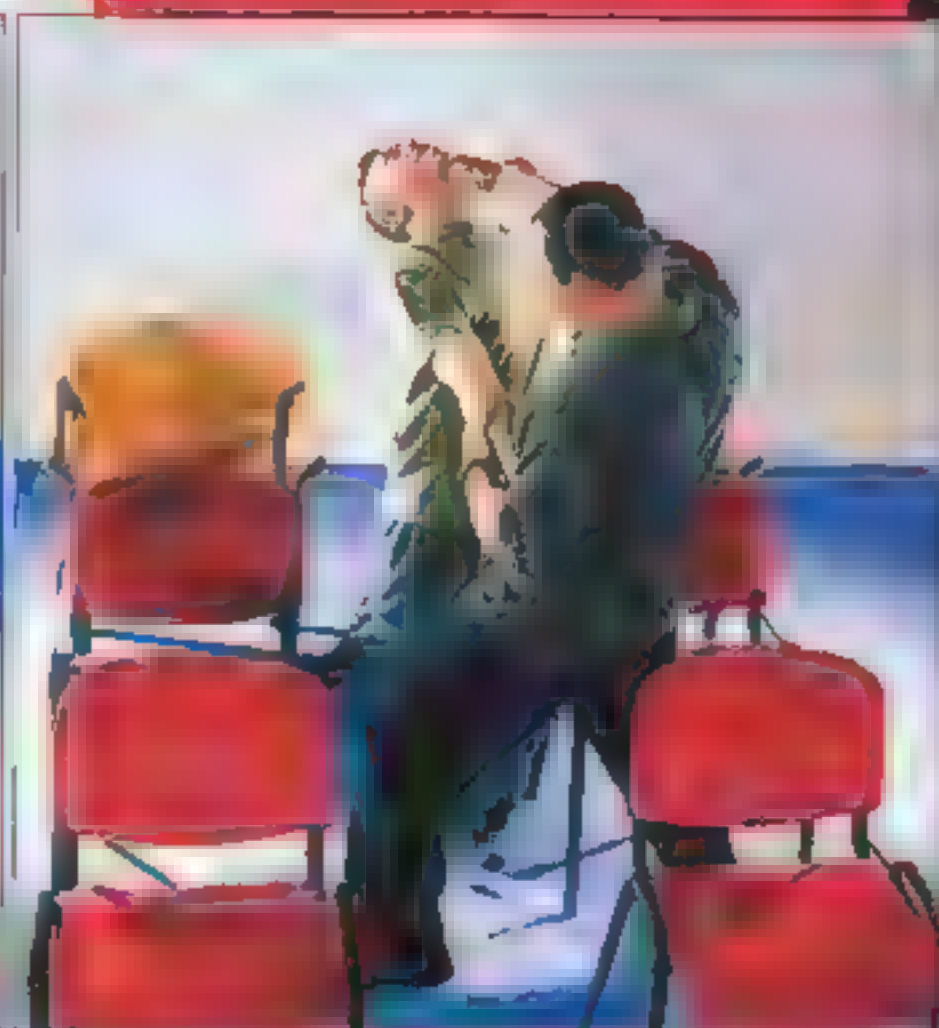
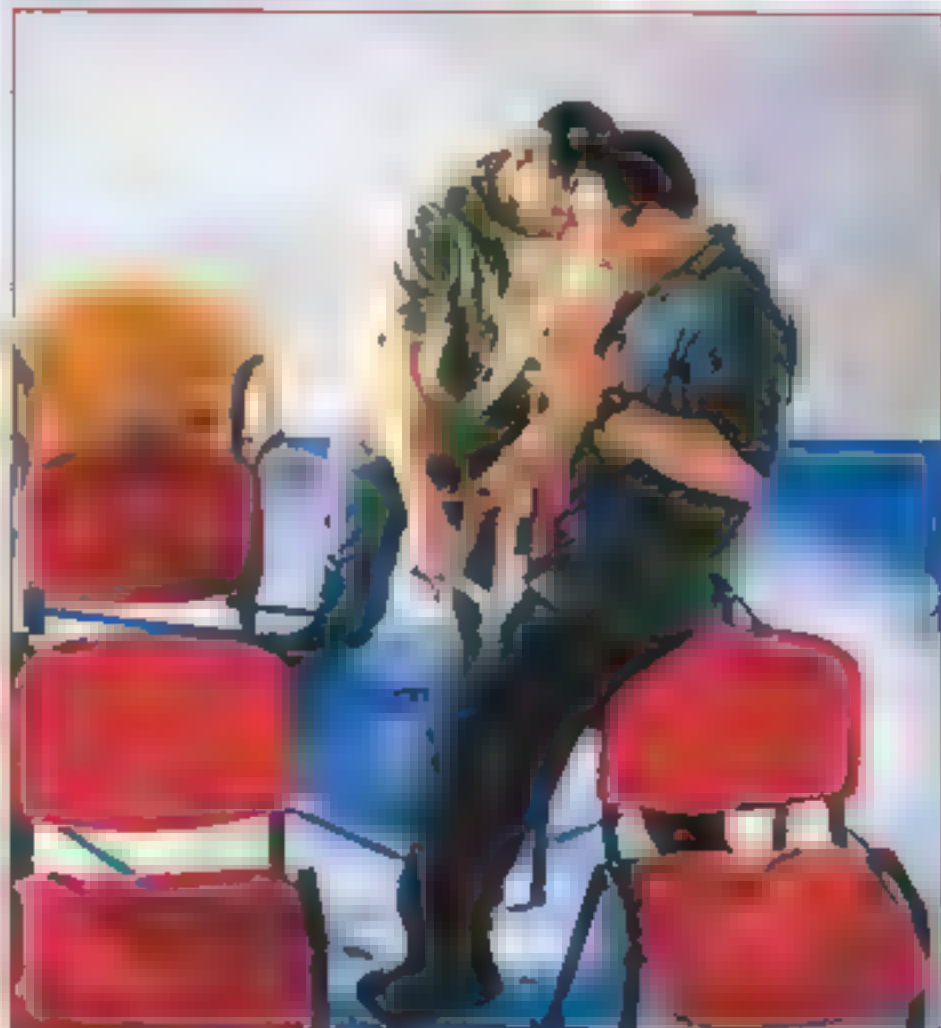
## No victory for the terrorists

Three days after the four airplanes went down I was ready to fly again. Unfortunately my flight to Canada was canceled because the United States government (the Federal Aviation Administration) would not allow foreign aircraft into the country for security reasons. Then, two weeks later I flew to Europe to train personnel of the London Metropolitan Police. Afterwards I flew to Madrid to do the photo shoot for this article. Some of my friends and family were obviously worried about me in

light of recent events. However, I was not really worried about flying. I was not going to let terrorists achieve their goal by making me live in terror.

Even though September 11th was horrible indeed, the chances of you coming face-to-face with a terrorist are statistically high. You are more likely to be struck by lightning than you are to be injured or killed by a terrorist. On the other hand, you can't pretend that you are immune from crime or terrorism either.

I've given you some ideas on how to train for aircraft incidents, now you have to put it into practice. Stay safe. ✕



*The time for delegating has come to an end, the idea of others defending us. Now each one of us should know that we have to actively partake in order to survive.*

*A simple pencil, a bottle can make the difference between absolute disaster and the neutralization of the attacker. A weapon is any object if it is in the hand of someone decisive, not to mention if the person is trained.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sergeant Jim Wagner is a member of his department's Dignitary Protection Unit (DPU) in the United States, which includes aircraft operations. He is also an honorary member of the Brazilian Air Force for training military security forces in aircraft interdiction, and he has trained European teams in the same. Sergeant Wagner is also a certified pilot. You may contact him through the training organization [www.jimwagnertraining.com](http://www.jimwagnertraining.com)



## The Smart Way to Preserve Your Skills

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All the physical skills you learn in the field of personal protection will perish over time if they're not used or practiced. Even if you master a complete system, it's not a one-time event like getting a college degree. You may well have earned your rank certificate, but that paper mounted on your wall will last longer than your skills if you don't put some effort into maintaining them.

That's not to say your body and mind will forget everything you've learned, but you will lose the edge you once had unless you do something about it.

The greatest strength of the reality-based martial arts is their simplicity, which contributes directly to their effectiveness. That's precisely why many police and military units have adopted this form of training. The problem with some of today's traditional arts is the abundance of techniques and tactics that have little to do with modern conflict situations.

In a real conflict, you will use only a few simple techniques. As a police and military defensive-tactics instructor for more than a decade, I've had the opportunity to confer with thousands of officers and soldiers about their experiences in armed and unarmed conflict. All of them have cited the same underlying principles: They used only basic techniques and did not take unnecessary chances using high kicks, complex moves or other techniques that deviated from their training.

Prioritization is the key to knowing which techniques and training methods to keep or discard. For example, I'm most likely to use simple frontal moves in a real self-de-

*Reality-based training entails wearing the clothing you expect to be wearing if you're forced to defend yourself and practicing only those techniques you know you can rely on.*



PHOTO BY RICK HUSTEAD





fense situation when I'm unarmed. Therefore, when I set out to maintain or improve my hand techniques, I spend most of my time practicing frontal, horizontal, diagonal and vertical arm strikes. By having only a few core skills to work on, I can more easily maintain them. In other words, I can manage my training time more efficiently.


An example of bad time management is practicing traditional kata. I am by no means saying I'm against forms. I love to watch them, and when I was young, I used to do them. I believe they have their place—for those whose focus is other than personal protection. If you don't believe me, consider this: If kata truly had any fighting value, military units and police agencies would practice them. The fact that they don't should send a clear message to all of us.

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***“The greatest strength of the reality-based martial arts is their simplicity, which contributes directly to their effectiveness. That’s precisely why many police and military units have adopted this form of training.”***

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There are several reasons kata are not embraced by those who fight for a living: They were created for a bygone era when fighting methods were different, they're practiced in empty air when all techniques should be practiced against solid objects (preferably other human beings) and they emphasize good form when the main focus should be on effectiveness.

In economics, people talk about “opportunity cost.” Basically, it means you have only enough money to buy one item you need but not enough for a second item of equal cost. In the martial arts, it's the same in that you have a limited amount of time to prepare yourself to deal with conflicts. Since all skills are perishable, you must prioritize your time and devote yourself to mastering the techniques that are most likely to guarantee your survival and discard those that do not serve that ultimate purpose. 

About the author: Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information, visit <http://www.jimwagnertraining.com>.



## BATTLING BODY ARMOR

BY JIM WAGNER

**B**lack Belt's editorial staff recently requested that I address a topic a reader proposed

How do you defend against a criminal with body armor? The question is pertinent for modern martial artists, especially those who live in large cities, because more and more criminals are opting to wear it

It's no secret that police officers and military personnel wear body armor to protect themselves against bullets, bomb fragments and edged weapons. But did you know that anybody can purchase quality body armor for himself even if he's not attached to a government entity? Logic would follow that if a private citizen can purchase this equipment, so can the criminals. Although you may decide not to wear it, what if you're challenged by someone clad in it? Does your training take

into account this possibility, or will you simply ignore the threat and hope it never happens to you?

The first real wake-up call that criminals are taking to body armor came on February 28, 1997. Two masked gunmen got into a shootout with the police after they botched a midmorning bank robbery in North Hollywood, California. It was later revealed that slain robbers Larry Phillips Jr. and Emil Matasareanu both wore body armor during the incident. Close to 300 LAPD officers were involved, and seven were shot (and survived). After that incident, police agencies around the world requisitioned new equipment and implemented new tactics to deal with people wearing body

armor. Martial arts schools, on the other hand, have been slow to implement any kind of training that addresses this danger.

When we talk about modern body armor, we're usually referring to soft armor that's designed to be bullet-resistant. A bulletproof vest is composed of layers of bullet-resistant webbing sandwiched between layers of plastic film coated with resin, then placed into a lightweight vest made of cloth-like fibers. These densely interwoven materials can absorb a tremendous amount of energy and are up to five times stronger than a piece of steel of the same weight.

The advantage of soft body armor is that it can be worn under traditional

*Martial artists without access to body armor can simulate it in training by having the attacker wear a chest protector.*



PHOTO BY ROBERT W. YOUNG



clothing and is virtually undetectable to the casual observer. When a bullet impacts the vest, the long fibers stretch, or "give," and absorb the energy of the bullet, forcing it to mushroom and stop.

The National Institute of Justice is the government entity that establishes national standards for this equipment. It has created seven classes based on ballistic performance: Type I (protection against .22 caliber long rifle lead round-nose bullets up to 380 ACP) Type IIA (protection against 9mm bullets up to 40 S&W), Type II (9mm bullets up to .357 Magnum), Type IIIA (protection against high-velocity 9mm bullets up to .44 Magnum), Type III (protection against rifle rounds up to 7.62mm full-metal jacket), Type IV (protection against armor-piercing rifle rounds) and Special Type (protection for other than standard ammunition).

Puncture- or cut-resistant body armor is manufactured with the fibers woven or laminated together. It works the same way as a bullet-resistant

vest works, i.e., by dissipating the impact forces over a larger area of the armor. Keep in mind that not all bullet-resistant soft body armor is puncture-resistant, and vice versa. Some products incorporate both qualities.

Most likely, you won't know an attacker is wearing soft body armor, especially if it's covered by a jacket or you're in a low-light environment. To deal with this uncertainty, you can incorporate into your training a technique that Special Operations personnel call the "triple tap" (strike-strike-pause-strike). Whether you're using a weapon or striking empty-handed, this tactic requires you to hit the assailant's body twice, then throw the third technique to his head. Whenever you suspect he's wearing body armor, remember that his head and neck are the most vulnerable targets.

Another vulnerable area for a person in body armor is the armpit. You aren't likely to do much damage if you strike there with a fist, but a blow effected with a penetrating weapon can be devastating.

If you don't have access to soft body armor and want to incorporate this element into your training, you can simulate the vest's rigidity by wearing a standard martial arts chest protector and throwing an oversized T-shirt over it. Practice using the triple-tap method against your opponent until you're proficient at overcoming assailants who may be wearing it.

It's statistically unlikely that you'll come face to face with a common criminal wearing soft body armor. However, the odds of such an encounter increase significantly when confronting heavily armed criminals or terrorists because they are becoming more sophisticated about committing their crimes. ❧

*About the author: Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information, visit <http://www.jimwagnertraining.com>.*



## CONFLICT IMMERSION

BY BEN YAGYCI

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
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JESSICA  
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JESSICA  
HAAS



**Y**AGYCI, 31, is a former Marine who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is currently a freelance photographer and writer. He has been covering conflict zones for over a decade. He is currently working on a book about his experiences in the military.

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method for simulating compressed decision time is based on a police drill called the Conflict Immersion Exercise. The wonderful thing about it is that anyone who studies self-defense can duplicate it anyplace at anytime. All you need is a paper bag, a length of cord, a partner to serve as the "puller" and a little role-playing skill.

Start by punching a hole in the bottom of an ordinary paper bag. Next thread the cord through the hole and duct-tape the end of it to the bottom of the bag. Then place the bag over the trainee's head and run the rest of the cord to the puller, who stands directly behind the trainee, ready to pull the bag off his head when a signal is given.

While the student still has the bag on his head and is "blind," a conflict scenario begins nearby. In the protective services, the trainee is sometimes surrounded by a hostile crowd. Other scenarios revolve around a hostage situation in which the student must handle charging

aggressors clad in body armor. (They're suited up so they can withstand empty-hand blows, blunt weapons and the impact of Simunition rounds.) In civilian training, the scenario might place the trainee in the middle of a riot, where the "thugs" are throwing tennis balls instead of bottles and rocks. Or it could be a large-scale bar fight or a bank robbery undertaken by multiple suspects. You can add noise and other sound effects, or stage the encounter in silence. The point is to ensure that the trainee has no idea what he will face or where the threat will come from.

When the instructor issues a hand signal, the puller yanks the cord to remove the bag from the trainee's head. He has a split second to grasp the situation and take action. He must quickly scan the area and identify the main threat without forgetting that there may be other dangers nearby. This is compressed decision time.

For traditional schools that are new to reality-based training, the intensity

can be lessened. Fit the trainee with sparring gear, and when the bag is removed, have two aggressors come in for the attack. Vary the scenario by adding a training knife or rubber handgun into the mix. When that becomes old hat, create gruesome "wounds" with stage blood, blow in fog from a fog machine, line up fellow students dressed as gang members, and arm them with air soft or paintball guns—of course with the proper safety gear for everyone.

In very little time, the participants will begin to see the results: shorter reaction times, the selection of more efficient techniques and a reduced shock effect when they are suddenly confronted with the unexpected. ✕

*About the author: Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information, visit <http://www.jimwagnertraining.com>*

Jim Wagner (left) with his students—the Defensive Tactics instructors of the Finnish National Police School (Polis koulus) in Tampere, Finland. The man on the right, also in black, is Dave Shorter, the Director of Jim Wagner's Reality-Based Personal Protection in England.







# The Psychology of Combat: Part I



**Sergeant Jim Wagner**

## The O.O.D.A. Process

Every time you are face to face with danger, especially combat, your mind always follows a predictable set pattern. This pattern is always the same, it never skips a step, and you can do nothing to change it. However, if you understand this natural process, then you can use it to your advantage – not only in self-defense situations, but also in the evolution of your training as well. This process, which is well known to military and police Special Operations (Specops) teams, is called the O.O.D.A. process – Observe, Orient, Decide, Act.

### Observe

In any crisis situation, one or more of your senses will first alert you: sight, hearing, touch or smell (the fifth sense is taste, but is unlikely to be of any value).

This first stimulus

warns the brain of danger. It could be a stab in the back with a knife (touch), the smell of a chemical that someone is about to throw in your face, or a noise made in the shadows as you walk to your car.

To develop your powers of observation you need to incorporate auditory and olfactory exercises in your training, not just kinesthetic (touch) exercises like the masses practice. Here are a couple of exercises that you can incorporate and which will refine each of your senses.

1. Blindfolded, stand in a circle of students (trainers) and react to the noise of the one who starts running toward you.

2. Walk blindfolded through the middle of two rows of students and get into a fighting stance when you smell a "threatening" smell. Perhaps a female student has on perfume (could be a possible threat), or another student has the smell of alcohol on his sleeve (definitely a warning indicator).

### Orient

Once your mind has identified a problem, it now wants to orient itself towards the threat. Until the mind can determine what the exact threat is, or where it is coming from, it will hesitate at this step. Of course, any hesitation on our part means a tactical advantage to the opponent.

To improve your orientation skills, here are a couple of exercises that I have my military and police students participate in.

1. Have two fighters face each other, both with their eyes closed. Move their positions slightly, still keeping their eyes closed. Upon the command, "Go!" both of them open their eyes and begin sparring. This forces them to observe then orient, and it helps their scanning abilities.

2. Place a student (the trainee) in an empty room and have him close his eyes. Bring a few students (trainers) into the room while loud music is playing so the trainee cannot hear where they position themselves. Have one trainer run at the trainee, have another to the side with a rubber knife, and yet another who starts running away upon the command, "Go!" This is also the command for the trainee to open their eyes. Such training will force the trainee to become faster at orienting.

### Decide

Once your mind perceives the threat, and you have oriented yourself to it, your mind will then decide what to do. In any combat situation there are only three choices: fight, run away, or submit.

What you decide to do will be determined not only by what you have observed, but other factors as well: your fear level, confidence level, fatigue, and whether you are injured or not. When faced with danger, some people become paralyzed with fear and just stand there doing nothing – this act would fall under submitting.

As a martial artist you too will be faced with these three choices if you are ever in mortal danger. The only way to know how you will react at the "moment of truth" is to make your training as realistic as possible, and experience it beforehand.

In military and police training we are always doing realistic scenarios, even in hand-to-hand fighting classes. Instead of having my students bow at each other, then directing them to fight, I will have them simulate a situation that they will most likely face. I may begin by having one student yelling and clenching his fists at the officer, and the officer has to decide what he or she is going to do. Or, perhaps the next time I'll have the student walk up to an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) to withdraw money (imaginary of course), and suddenly from behind, the "attacker" comes up with a rubber pistol demanding money.

The more variety that you have in your training, the better your decision skills will become. The problem with many martial arts schools is that they lack realistic scenario training, and when a student is faced with brutal reality they are often not prepared to handle it, because their training did not reflect real life possibilities.

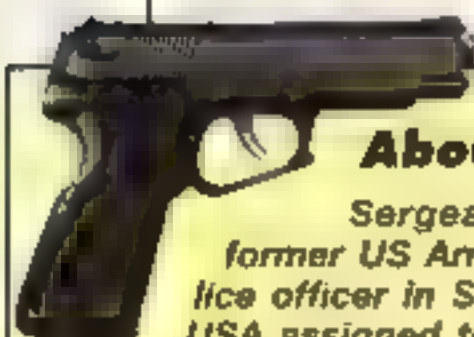
### Act

The final step in the O.O.D.A. process is to act upon your decision. No matter what course of action you decide you must be committed to it 100%.

The United States Marines have an expression called, "Violence of Action." It does not mean going around being violent. It means that whatever your action, whether right or wrong, you go into your combat plan with complete confidence, and with the mindset to carry it out to the very end – aggressively. If you are not totally committed to your action, your enemy will read this. By also employing violence of action you are slowing down your opponent's O.O.D.A. process, by having him confused or having to think. Remember, the process works both ways, and you can exploit this knowledge to your advantage.

### Stand by

Next month we will discuss what your mind and body go through before, during, and after actual combat as we explore the Assault Cycle. ✕



### About the author:

Sergeant Jim Wagner, a former US Army soldier, is a police officer in Southern California, USA assigned to his department's Dignitary Protection Unit. Sergeant Wagner is one of the world's top Combatives Instructors (for both the US military and police units worldwide). You may contact Sergeant Wagner through the training organization

www.wagnertraining.com

Text: Sergeant Jim Wagner

Photos: Bob Schmitt and Paul



## COMPRESSED DECISION TIME

BY JIM WAGNER

*The best way to develop your compressed-decision-time functionality is realistic conflict-rehearsal training, Jim Wagner says.*



PHOTO BY ROBERT W. YOUNG

**W**hether they take place in the *dojo* or the ring, most sparring matches begin, proceed and end the same way. The instructor or referee issues a command to start, and the participants engage in a one-on-one battle in a controlled environment. Such matches don't include the pre-conflict stage, which consists of conflict indicators and possible criminal acts. When one person scores the final point or the bell rings, the fighters are automatically separated.

Therefore, the matches also lack a post-conflict stage, in which an escape, citizen's arrest or police arrest takes place. Afterward, there's the customary bow or touching of gloves to show sportsmanship, and the participants disengage.

Although such customs are acceptable at most schools and clubs, that type of training doesn't prepare you for all self-defense situations. Worse still, it doesn't even come close to helping you develop your compressed-

decision-time skills.

Experience in traditional and sporting matches does have some value when it comes to defending yourself—such as preparing you to prevail in a one-on-one bar fight, a simple assault and battery, and even a skirmish with an unarmed mugger. However, it isn't designed to physically and mentally train you to deal with a home-invasion robbery, a small-arms terrorist attack or a bar fight in which a second suspect breaks a pool cue across your



back. Real fights unfold rapidly and offer virtually no preparation time, overloading your mind with information and requiring you to make split-second decisions to survive. They often include multitasking—protecting others, defending against a modern weapon, deploying your own weapon, communicating with others and so on.

Fortunately, incorporating compressed-decision-time drills into your training is easy. You simply start with realistic conflict rehearsal, better known as role playing.

While teaching a one-day terrorism-survival course at a karate school in Vancouver, Canada, I decided to conduct our conflict rehearsal by simulating an attack that occurred at the Los Angeles International Airport in 2002. In that case, an Egyptian-born terrorist killed a female employee and wounded customers at the El Al Israeli Airlines ticket counter. I devised a ticket counter by stacking several kicking shields, then asked some students to stand in line in front of it while others sat in plastic chairs or chatted nearby.

For safety, I had all of them don protective goggles.

A man wearing a ski mask (role-playing the terrorist) then casually walked toward the counter and started shooting at people with an Airsoft gun. Two of the students in line immediately felt the sting of the plastic pellets and were "killed." Others hit the deck or dived for cover as they had been taught. As the terrorist made his way around the counter to execute the ticket agent, he turned his back to the carnage. At that moment, another student took advantage of the pause and rushed the terrorist, jumping him from behind and taking him down. In spite of the confusion, the "bodies," the noise of the airport (supplied on tape) and the suddenness of the terrorist's attack, that student was able to think quickly and save the day. He had learned his lesson.

The man pretending to be the terrorist was a *hapkido* instructor from a nearby school. Although he's a good fighter, he'd never experienced such a

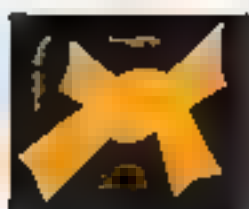
realistic scenario. He was so caught up in the chase-instinct phase of his attack that by the time he saw the other person coming at him, it was too late.

Obviously, everyone who participated in the training learned something valuable.

Compressed decision time is familiar territory for those who belong to the police and military community, but it's a new concept in the civilian martial arts. Nonetheless, it's something you can make your own simply by modeling your training scenarios after the way real events unfold. With a bit of creativity with respect to props and some common sense when it comes to safety gear, it can transform you into a hard target. ❧

*About the author: Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information, visit <http://www.jimwagnertraining.com>.*





# **SERGEANT JIM WAGNER**

## **SELF DEFENSE IN THE SKIES**

Many things have changed since September 11th, this indeed includes the concept of security on planes. The rules for taking action when confronting a hijack are no longer "collaborators of the hijackers". Each passenger is a potential soldier in this war and should be trained to take care of himself and help others. Jim Wagner, a well-known expert by our readers has reflected on this point from many angles. If you want to know what are your possibilities and how to react confronting an attack against your life, do not miss this magnificent article.







In the 1970's Arab terrorists wanted to humiliate and destroy Israel. War did not accomplish this, so the next best way was terrorism. However, the terrorists soon found that hijacking Israeli airplanes was not an easy task. The Israelis made their airplanes "hard targets" and were considered the most secure aircraft in the free world. Therefore, the terrorists chose "soft targets" – American and European passenger aircraft. The 70's and 80's was the era of hijackings.

In the past, the terrorists would seize an aircraft, force it down in a sympathizing country, make demands (for free passage or the release of imprisoned fellow terrorists), then usually release the hostages after receiving adequate media attention. Back then no terrorist thought of flying an aircraft into a building.

Then, on September 11, 2001 a new form of terrorism emerged on the world scene. Again, the terrorists had their sights on attacking Israel, but Israeli security was too tight. Therefore, the terrorists chose a "soft target" – American passenger aircraft. Only this time there would be no negotiations, and no releasing of hostages. It was a barbaric new form of terrorism – the suicide airplane. Not only was it the most horrific act of terrorism in history, costing over 6,000 lives, but also it was also the most dramatic martial arts story of the new millennium.

What was the reason for the attacks? On October 8, 2001, during the American and British bombing of terrorists camps in Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, released a video tape of himself declaring that the terrorist attacks of September 11 were the result of the United States supporting Israel.

### ***Knife fight in the sky***

On September 11, 2001 four American civilian aircraft were taken over by Arab terrorists who were armed with knives and box cutters. The first airplane, American Airlines Flight 11, crashed into New York's World Trade Center's north tower. Eighteen minutes later a second airplane, United Airlines Flight 175, slammed into the south tower. Then the boldest act of terrorism of them all occurred. The center of American military might, the Pentagon building (just outside of Washington D.C.) was partially destroyed by American Airlines Flight 77.

There was a fourth airplane that was hijacked, United Airlines Flight 93, which never made it to its intended "target." U.S. Intelligence sources believe that this airplane was heading toward the White House (the residence



*Just as is taught by the experts, we have recreated with Jim Wagner the small space in which the fight has to take place within a plane. The battle field is very narrow and we have to train to understand how to take advantage of this area (the use of the knife is limited because of the seats, that act as shields) or with the weapons we have: a simple little packet of sugar (see the photos on the page before) or a bottle (photo above these lines).*

of the President) or possibly the Capital building down the street (the very seat of the United States government). The terrorists did not succeed, because a few passengers decided to fight back. They fought against the knives.

When President George W. Bush addressed the U.S. Congress a week after the attack, he named passenger Todd Beamer as a genuine American hero. Beamer phoned his wife from Flight 93 during the hijacking and she told him about the incidents in New York and Washington D.C. He knew that the same fate awaited him and the other passengers. With this information in mind he told his wife, Lisa Beamer, that he and other passengers were going to attempt to take the airplane back. Other male passengers (people like Tom Burnett, Jeremy Glick, and Mark Bringham) called their families from air phones and told them the same thing – they were going to fight back, and try to take the airplane back.

### ***What if it were you?***

If we have learned anything from history, it's that terrorists will repeat "successful" acts of terror. The recent attacks in America achieved the effect that the terrorists wanted: it showed that buildings are vulnerable to suicide flights, innocent people are easy targets, it slowed down the economy, and it produced fear (which quickly turned into righteous anger). Therefore, similar attacks are inevitable.

The question now is, "What about if the airplane you are on next time gets hijacked? Are you better prepared than the terrorists, and do you know how to fight back?"

As a member of an elite law enforcement team in the United States, and an active police/military trainer for counter-terrorists teams across the globe, I am unable to divulge sensitive counter-terrorist techniques, but I can provide you with practical advice on things you can do as a martial artist, based upon my experience, which you can use in the un-





*The American flag in black on khaki is the symbol of all the anti-terrorists units used during liberty/freedom operation since the 11th of September.*

bied easily). You can add push carts, and have other students play the roles of passengers.

### **Training equipment**

The hijackers that took over flights 11, 175, 77 and 93 were armed with knives and box cutters, but keep in mind that some hijackings also involve guns. As martial artists we already practice with training knives and guns (rubber, wood or plastic replicas). These training tools are also excellent for learning to defeat hijackers.

To make your training more realistic (referred to as reality-based training by American police) all participants should wear the clothes that they would actually fight in. The "terrorists" should be wearing normal street clothes, in addition to protective equipment for contact, and the "victims" should be wearing travel clothes. The more realistic the training equipment, the more real the training will feel.

### **Before the hijacking**

In real situations, and in training as well, you want to always anticipate possible problems and prepare for them. Here are several suggestions of pre-conflict preparation:

1. Request an exit seat. Whether you select your seat by e-ticket or at the airline ticket counter, always try to request an exit seat over the wing, unless you are flying First Class. This is not only the strongest part of the airplane in case of a crash landing, but the wing is situated in the middle of the "tube." If trouble begins in the front or the back of the aircraft you will be able to react to it faster.

2. Always select an aisle seat. You do not want to be seated next to a window or in between people. You do not want to have to climb over anybody in the event of an emergency. Always choose an aisle seat so you can get up, or escape quickly.

3. Bring handcuffs. Although metal handcuffs are not allowed on passenger aircraft, you can bring alternative restraining devices in case you have to "arrest" someone (plumbers plastic tie straps, shoestring, duct tape, etc.)

4. Observe suspicious passengers. Without looking obvious, or nervous yourself, always look for suspicious passengers. Do not assume that the next attack will be from Arab terrorists. Terrorists can be of any sex, race, or background. Rather, you should look for suspicious behavior patterns: nervous, scared, angry, or very focused. Look around for anyone making hand signals to other passengers.

5. Wear fighting clothes. Wear appropriate clothes for a fight, such as loose

fitting clothes, long pants, and a good pair of shoes for kicking, running or stomping.

### **During the hijacking**

If, in the future, you ever become a victim in a hijacking there are no longer any guarantees that you will survive the incident. The hijackers may be from the "old school" and try to negotiate, or they may be of the "new school" and have plans to crash the aircraft into a building - with you in it. There is simply no way to know what the intentions of the terrorists will be since the "rules" have changed after September 11, 2001.

If you do decide to fight aboard an aircraft, here are some tactics and techniques that may help save your life and the life of others:

1. Ambush the ambushers. When a criminal or a terrorist first jumps up from their seat to seize the aircraft they will be loud and violent in order to intimidate the passengers and flight crew. By doing this tactic the terrorists hope to control the aircraft as soon as possible through fear. Once they have control of the aircraft it is more difficult for the passengers and crew to resist or to counter-attack. In military operations soldiers are taught to attack the attacker if they are ambushed instead of staying in the "kill zone" where the attacker has the advantage. This move puts the attackers on the defensive, which can possibly stop the ambush.

2. Take command. Every police officer in the United States learns about "command presence." It means that you control a situation with your appearance (confident look), verbal authority (strong verbal commands to other passengers ordering them to assist you), and commitment (certainty about your mission, which will influence others to follow).

3. Linear kicks. The seats of aircraft are taller than a dining room chair, and the aisle between the rows of seats are narrow (about the width of the average adult forearm to forearm). Therefore, you will be restricted to front kicks and straight knee strikes. Round kicks, side kicks, or any type of spinning kicks are prohibitive. Your target should be a well-placed front kick or knee strike to the pelvic area. This target is a person's center of gravity (COG), and a forceful strike will "stop or drop" most people. Do not do high kicks (above the pelvic area) or weak snap kicks.

4. Keep it simple. Use only simple hard hitting, closed-fist punches and devastating elbow strikes. If you do use open-hand techniques they should be to vital areas (eyes, throat, and neck).

5. Use a shield. On Flights 11, 175, 77 and 93 the hijackers were armed with knives and box cutters. Although airport security has improved since September,

### **A police & military perspective**

The type of fighting that police and military special operations teams do inside aircraft is called tubular assault. This term refers to any linear assault, and also applies to buses and trains. In other words, movement and action conducted in a narrow passage way. To fight in this environment requires special training and considerations.

Before I go into the various fighting techniques used aboard aircraft, you must remember that there are three phases to combat: 1. Pre-conflict, 2. Conflict, 3. Post-conflict. Most martial arts training focuses on the actual conflict (the punching and kicking), but they fail to train in pre-conflict (preparations before a conflict), and what to do immediately after (post-conflict). It is important that we cover all three phases when training for aircraft situations.

### **The training environment**

The ideal training environment is to actually train aboard a passenger aircraft, but unless you are on an elite police or military team that specializes in Aircraft Interdiction, this will not be possible. However, you can create your own "aircraft" for training purposes.

When I was down in Brazil last year training the Air Force's Special Forces team GEPA, we did nothing more than set up chairs and drew an outline of the airplane with chalk in an aircraft hanger. You can do the same thing to practice your techniques and to understand the spatial "feel" for this type of environment. Of course my Brazilian students later practiced their techniques on an actual aircraft with Varig Brasil Airlines, but they knew what to do inside the aircraft prior to boarding based upon our simple training model.

If you wish to be more elaborate, you can even build yourself a small section of "aircraft" with walls made of wooden boards and plastic sheets (something which can be assembled and disassembled

likely event that you become a victim like those people of Flight 93.



it is still possible for someone to conceal cutting and stabbing items on an aircraft, such as composite plastic knives, which cannot be detected by metal detectors. The only way to assure that nobody carries any weapons aboard an aircraft is to forbid all carry-on items, issue all passengers a jumpsuit, frisk them, then have them go through a Backscatter X-ray scan (a machine that can look through a person's clothes, and produces images which are very revealing). Therefore, if you find that your hijackers have knives, you need to make a shield to protect yourself out of a jacket wrapped around your arm, a briefcase, purse or even a rolled up flight magazine. A shield will protect you from stabs and slashes.

6. Improvised weapons. I am not advising you to bring weapons aboard any aircraft (it's against the law), but you need to think of items that you can use as a weapon in the event of a hijacking. I can think of several "improvised weapons," such as a belt

with a large belt buckle (flexible weapon), a metal writing pen (stabbing weapon), a cowboy boot or air phone (impact weapon), an unopened can of Coke (throwing weapon), a handful of sugar, salt and pepper (distraction weapon) etc. The airlines may prevent you from carrying knives or other edged weapons on their aircraft, but they can't take away everything – especially your warrior spirit. As the U.S. Marine Close Combat instructors say – One mind, any weapon.

7. Use your environment. The free access areas in an aircraft are quite limited even in large aircraft such as the Boeing 747. Your fighting area will be very small, such as in an aisle, near a toilet, or by an emergency exit. Therefore, you must train in confined areas to know what techniques work and which do not. You must also learn to use your environment to your tactical advantage: brace yourself against seats for balance, shove the terrorist's head into the overhead baggage rack, or push a terrorist between the seats and try to pin him there. Again, the only way to understand all of your options in an aircraft is to create your own "aircraft" using the same measurements.

8. Make the arrest. You must not make the mistake of thinking that all future hijackings will be like those of September

11th. You may be facing an army of hijackers or a single suspect who is mentally disturbed. If you do happen to subdue a hijacker, what are you going to do with him, or them? One of the most overlooked areas of conflict by traditional martial artists is the post-conflict phase. Although the immediate danger may be over, there are still other factors to consider – such as arresting those who you have defeated. Are you going to just sit on him the rest of the flight or do you have restraining devices? I personally carry nylon handcuffs (which are carried by many of today's counter-terrorist teams) aboard each flight that I take. However, you can also use shoelaces, duct tape, a belt, torn strips of a shirt, etc. The important thing is to incorporate arrest and control techniques into your training just as you would ground fighting or weapons training.

9. Carry a "go bag." When I fly commercially I always have a small carry-on bag that I store under the seat in front of me. I can quickly place the shoulder strap over my shoulder and go with it if I need it in any type of emergency (whether a plane crash or a fight), that's why it is called a "go bag" – it's always ready to go. Inside my bag I have the following items: first aid kit, flashlight, wa-

ter, food (protein bars), whistle, flexible handcuffs, smoke hood, and something I can use as a weapon (I will keep that to myself). I also put in some business papers to disguise its true purpose.

10. Team tactics. If you are traveling with someone, it is a good idea to discuss a plan of action together, such as roles and responsibilities, should a hijacking take place. Being prepared beforehand is much better tactically, then having to come up with a hasty plan at the moment of the conflict. Come up with key alert words (such as "Okay, I am your prisoner" indicates to your partner to start fighting in 5 seconds). Also discuss hand signals and the type of techniques you would use in various situations. Discuss these things quietly since you may be sitting next to a terrorist, and would not want to be overheard.

### *Train hard, fight easy*

Ever since September 11th, I have heard many martial artists say, "If it happened to me, I would fight back. Nobody is going to crash me into a building if I can help it." That's a good attitude to have as a martial artist, but do you really know what you will be up against? When the day comes for you to act on your







# SERGEANT JIM WAGNER

words, will your martial arts training have been sufficient enough to have prepared you for a real-world fight? Not just physically, but mentally as well? After all, 90% of combat is mental. Have you ever had to fight for your life before? Do you know how it feels to have adrenaline surge through your body, to get "tunnel vision," and to rely upon gross motor skills?

The key to good combat conditioning is to train harder than your enemy. In the case of the American hijackings, the enemy (the terrorists) were devoted to their training. Hijacker Jarrah is a good case in point.

Ziad Samir Jarrah, the terrorist pilot of United Airlines Flight 93, was studying knife fighting and other martial arts techniques prior to his "mission." His American instructor Bert Rodriguez (owner of US-1 Fitness Centers) said that Jarrah was a "poite," "dedicated" and a "good student." He also attended terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, probably near Kandahar, Khowst or Jalalabad. Of course, Jarrah proved that he was willing to fight to the death. Thus, when you're practicing your techniques, remember that they may be used one day against someone like Jarrah.

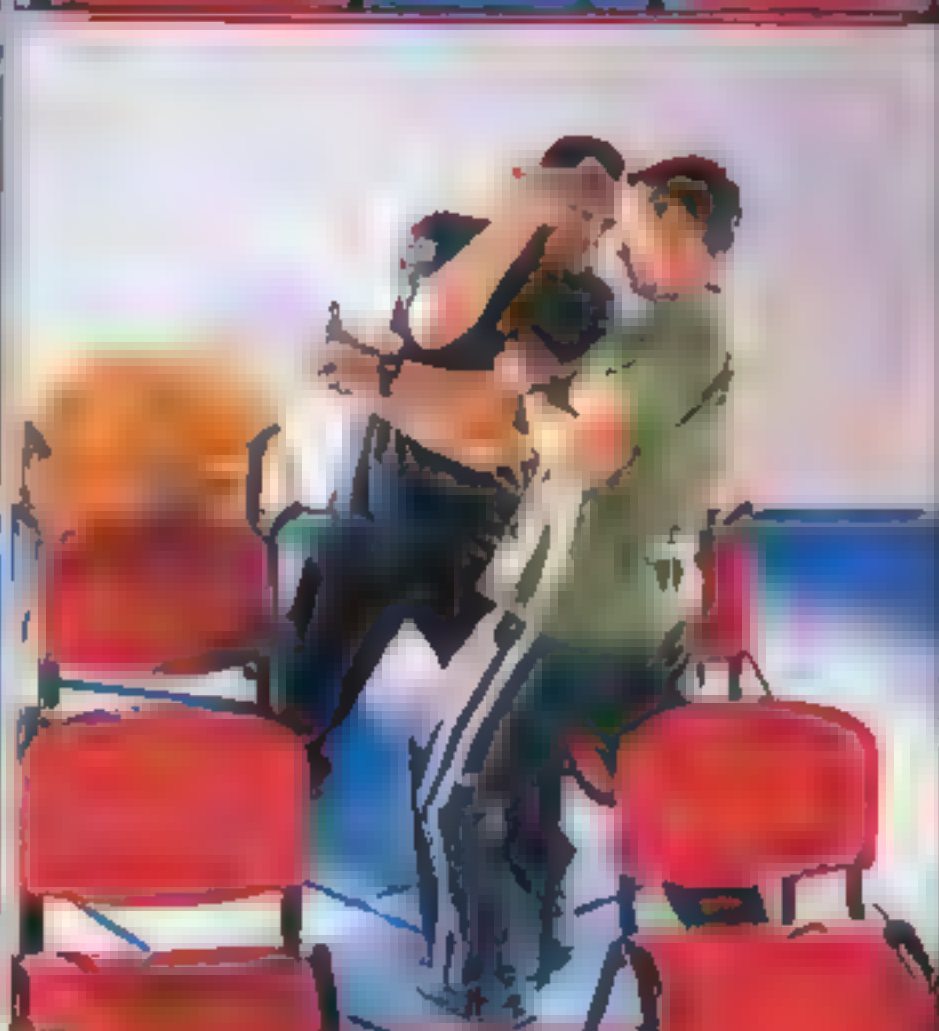
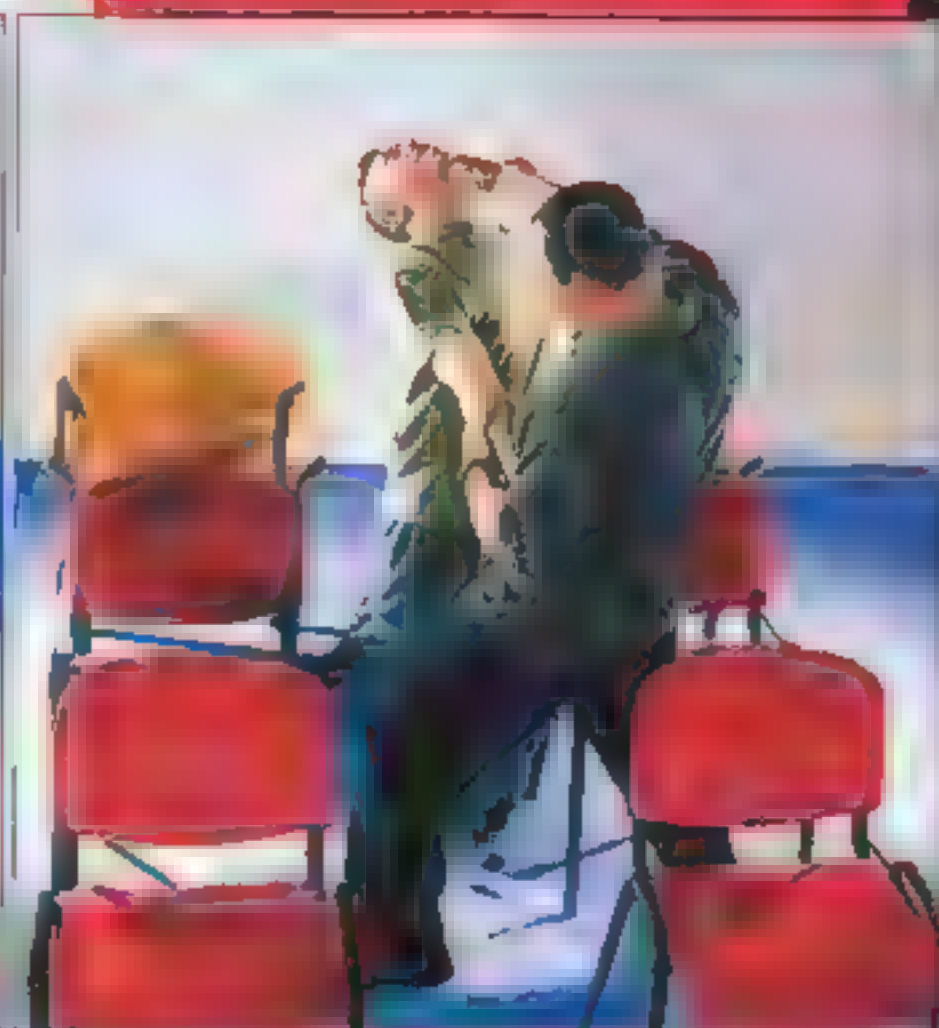
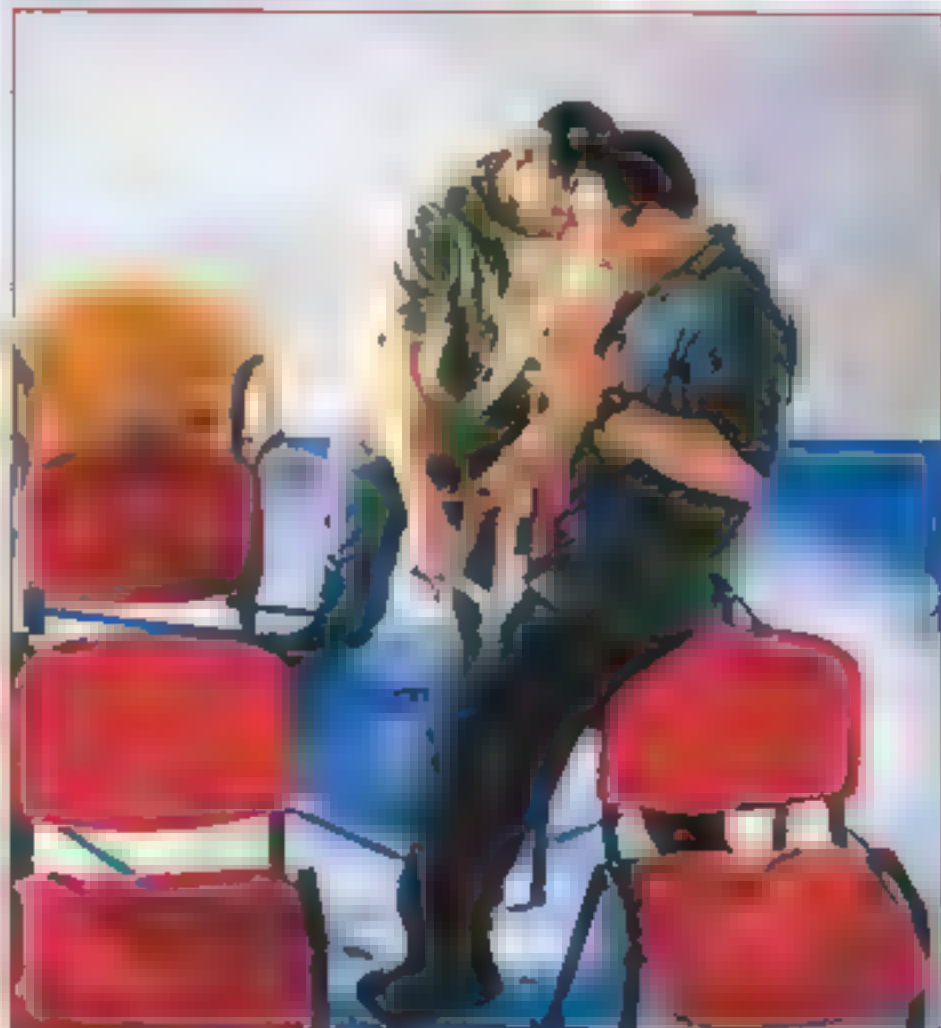
## No victory for the terrorists

Three days after the four airplanes went down I was ready to fly again. Unfortunately my flight to Canada was canceled because the United States government (the Federal Aviation Administration) would not allow foreign aircraft into the country for security reasons. Then, two weeks later I flew to Europe to train personnel of the London Metropolitan Police. Afterwards I flew to Madrid to do the photo shoot for this article. Some of my friends and family were obviously worried about me in

light of recent events. However, I was not really worried about flying. I was not going to let terrorists achieve their goal by making me live in terror.

Even though September 11th was horrible indeed, the chances of you coming face-to-face with a terrorist are statistically high. You are more likely to be struck by lightning than you are to be injured or killed by a terrorist. On the other hand, you can't pretend that you are immune from crime or terrorism either.

I've given you some ideas on how to train for aircraft incidents, now you have to put it into practice. Stay safe. ✕



*The time for delegating has come to an end, the idea of others defending us. Now each one of us should know that we have to actively partake in order to survive.*

*A simple pencil, a bottle can make the difference between absolute disaster and the neutralization of the attacker. A weapon is any object if it is in the hand of someone decisive, not to mention if the person is trained.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sergeant Jim Wagner is a member of his department's Dignitary Protection Unit (DPU) in the United States, which includes aircraft operations. He is also an honorary member of the Brazilian Air Force for training military security forces in aircraft interdiction, and he has trained European teams in the same. Sergeant Wagner is also a certified pilot. You may contact him through the training organization [www.jimwagnertraining.com](http://www.jimwagnertraining.com)



## Theory vs. Reality

**I**f you haven't been forced to use your martial arts skills in a real fight, everything you've learned and practiced in the theory. On the other hand, if you've had to actually

fight someone in an uncontrolled environment—whether successfully or unsuccessfully—you've experienced reality be-

cause you've put your skills to the ultimate test.

You must remember, however, that even if you have fought once or twice, those experiences may not have adequately prepared you for future conflicts. For example, you may indeed have the skills to protect yourself in a one-on-one fistfight based on your past experiences but be totally unprepared to survive a knife assault, an armed robbery or a terrorist hand-grenade attack.

That leaves most people back where they started. Since real-life experiences are rare and potentially life-threatening, the only tools you have for dealing with unfamiliar future scenarios are theory and training. Obviously, you'll want to ensure your theory and training are the best they can be.

How do you remedy that shortcoming? You find the right instructor and the right system. Before you can do that, however, you need to identify what you want to get out of your training.

Martial arts instruction falls into three general categories: traditional-based, sport-based and reality-based. Of course, a curriculum can fit into more than one category, but usually it will have one main emphasis. Because you're reading this column, I'll assume your primary purpose for studying the martial arts is personal protection. Therefore, I'll focus on the reality-based category. The two critical components of your martial arts education should therefore be the content of the system and the background, training and experience of the instructor.

If you're a civilian martial artist, you'll want a system that deals with modern conflict situations. If you find a school that teaches its students how to handle carjackings, sexual assaults, caustic chemical attacks, robberies, gang attacks, terrorism and the like, you may be in the right place. You'll also want to ask the instructor point-blank where his conflict experience comes from. Has he actually seen the "enemy," or is he passing down information he's obtained from someone else? If he's passing information down the line, did it come from legitimate sources or from a long line of instructors who've never faced reality either?

Even if you do find an instructor who has been around, nobody can be expected to have hands-on experience in every aspect of conflict. I'll recount a personal story to illustrate this point: Soon after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I was chosen by the U.S. government to be a counterterrorist agent. One of my duties was to pose as a passenger on commercial aircraft and be ready to

*If your main interest is self-defense, you should seek out an instructor who teaches a proven system and who has real-world experience using it, says Jim Wagner.*

PHOTO BY RICK HUSTEAD



neutralize any threat that might materialize. Ultimately I participated in 146 missions, yet during that time, there were no terrorist attacks aboard U.S. planes. Even though I learned a lot from the missions, I didn't acquire any real-world experience involving a shootout on a plane. Does that mean I wouldn't be prepared for a real situation or qualified to instruct other agents? No.

when it comes to defensive tactics on the street, my training and experience give me a heightened sense of reality, and I can pass on valid techniques to my students because of it.

The moral of the story is this: If you don't have actual experience to draw from, the next best thing is to come as close to it as you safely can. For most people, that entails

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***"If you find a school that teaches its students how to handle carjackings, sexual assaults, caustic chemical attacks, robberies, gang attacks, terrorism and the like, you may be in the right place."***

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Although terrorism aboard airplanes is a high-risk situation, it's a low-frequency event. Since it's so rare, none of my instructors had ever been involved in a shootout on an aircraft. They did, however, rely upon parallel experiences that could be applied to what happens during a plane attack. Thus, the training was still based on reality and not just theory.

In contrast, I can't count the number of times I was involved in fist-and-feet conflicts as a cop. Struggling with a suspect is a high-risk, high-frequency event. Therefore,

using conflict rehearsal, or scenario training with actors and props conducted in a realistic environment with a qualified instructor. Anything short of that will mean you're cheating yourself or, even worse, developing a false sense of security. And that can get you killed. ✕

*About the author: Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information, visit <http://www.jimwagnertraining.com>.*

Jim Wagner (right) in stage make-up posing as a "cholo" (East Los Angeles Hispanic gang member) during a scenario training for a police department.





## THE ULTIMATE SKILL

BY JIM WAGNER

**T**hese days, most career criminals are packing, and their second-most common weapon after the knife is the handgun. Consequently, more and more martial artists are studying reality-based combat systems that specifically teach ways to disarm a gunman. Such training normally includes techniques and tactics that can be employed in close-quar-

ters-battle range (within 21 feet) and sometimes beyond. Before I delve into methods you can use to advance your gun-defense skills, I'll briefly explain the kind of damage a bullet can do when it strikes a body.

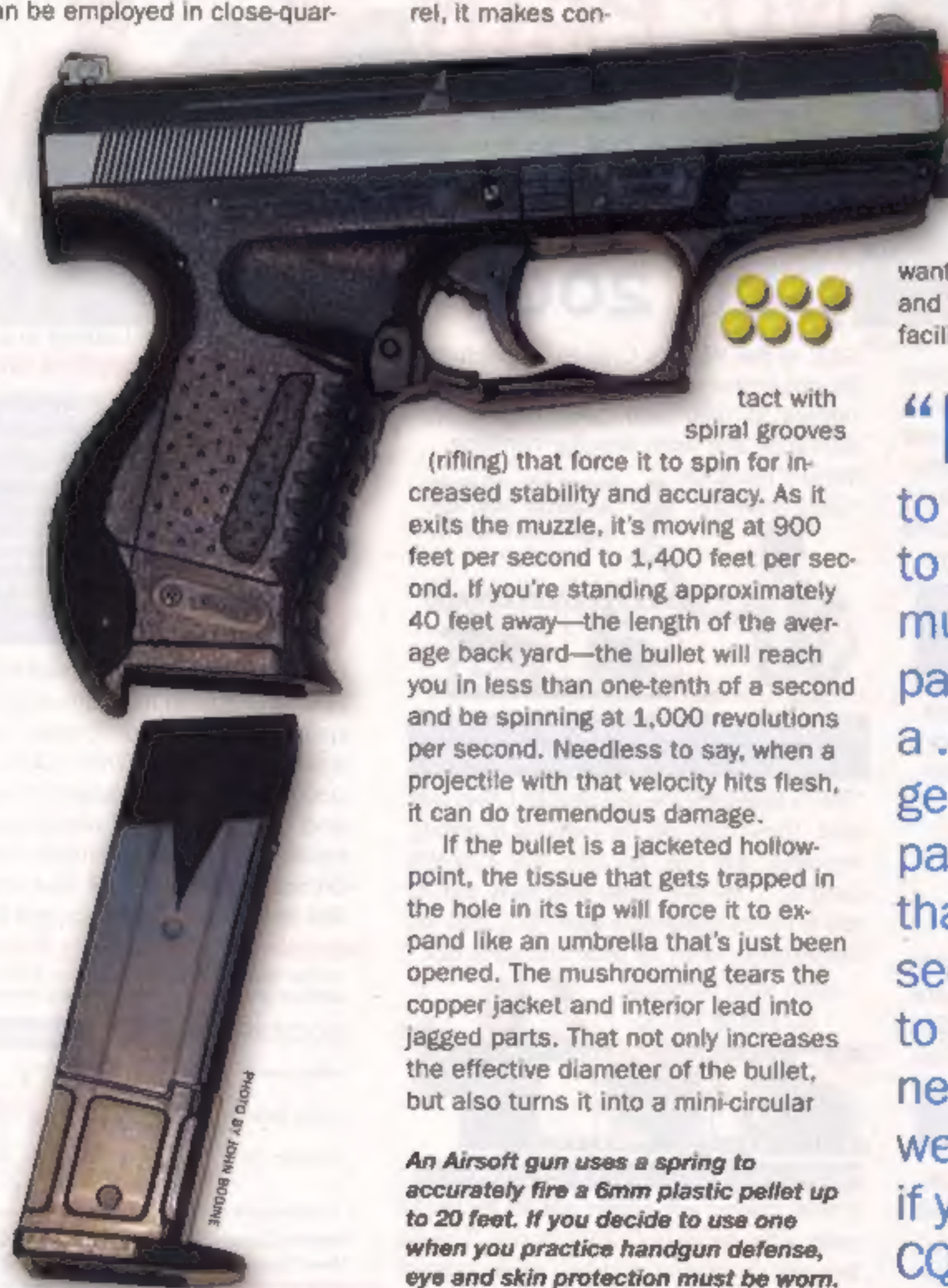
Let's say a gangbanger points a handgun at you and pulls the trigger. As the bullet travels down the barrel, it makes con-

saw as the edges slice through muscle.

When the bullet enters the body, it creates a temporary vacuum behind it. The shock wave forms a rapidly expanding cavity that compresses nearby muscle tissue and organs while shattering any bones that get in the way. Because the spinning of

the bullet is so violent, it may hit a bone and careen off in a different direction. It's not uncommon for a person to be shot in the chest and have the bullet leave his body at the neck or hip.

The bottom line is, you never want to be shot. However, if you are and you're relatively close to a medical facility, statistically you have a 90-per-



tact with spiral grooves

(rifling) that force it to spin for increased stability and accuracy. As it exits the muzzle, it's moving at 900 feet per second to 1,400 feet per second. If you're standing approximately 40 feet away—the length of the average back yard—the bullet will reach you in less than one-tenth of a second and be spinning at 1,000 revolutions per second. Needless to say, when a projectile with that velocity hits flesh, it can do tremendous damage.

If the bullet is a jacketed hollow-point, the tissue that gets trapped in the hole in its tip will force it to expand like an umbrella that's just been opened. The mushrooming tears the copper jacket and interior lead into jagged parts. That not only increases the effective diameter of the bullet, but also turns it into a mini-circular

*An Airsoft gun uses a spring to accurately fire a 6mm plastic pellet up to 20 feet. If you decide to use one when you practice handgun defense, eye and skin protection must be worn.*

**“If you really want to know how it feels to get shot, you must train with paint guns. They fire a .64-caliber gelatin-encased paintball at less than 300 feet per second. You’ll need to don full head and neck protection and wear thick clothing if you plan to be in CQB range.”**



cent chance of surviving. People around the world get shot every day and live to tell about it. The important thing is to keep a positive mental attitude and continue fighting or trying to escape. In police training, we call that having the will to survive.

If you ever face an armed criminal or a terrorist, you risk getting shot. Therefore, you should prepare by incorporating firearms training into your self-defense regimen. When I teach seminars to civilians, I use Airsoft guns that fire 6mm plastic projectiles. They shoot accurately up to about 20 feet, and the only protective gear needed is a pair of safety goggles for everyone in the training area. When a plastic pellet hits skin, it imparts a nice sting, so long pants and long sleeves are also a good idea.

If you really want to know how it feels to get shot, you must train with paint guns. They fire a .64-caliber gelatin-encased paintball at less than 300 feet per second. You'll need to don full

head and neck protection and wear thick clothing if you plan to be in CQB range. When you get hit, you'll experience instant shock and momentary nausea. Shots taken closer than 10 feet can even break the skin—hence the need for protective gear. Paintball guns will help you appreciate the true power of firearms, but they don't even come close to the real thing.

When I train police and military students, I always strive for maximum realism. Sometimes I approach two students while they're engaged in hand-to-hand combat and shoot the "good guy" in the leg with a paintball gun. Without a doubt he'll cringe at the intense pain, but as long as he continues to fight back, I don't say anything. Once in a while, he'll stop resisting and obsess on the pain, in which case I'll shout at him until he once again focuses on the task at hand: preserving his life. This methodology may sound cruel, but it teaches people who fight for a living to persevere regardless of

their injuries. (In your own training, you should never fire a paintball gun at a body part that's unprotected.)

The reality-based martial arts encompass techniques for addressing a much broader spectrum of situations than do the traditional and sport-based systems. That's partially because violence in modern society tends to incorporate new technology and tactics as soon as they become available. Even if your instructor doesn't devote much class time to such topics, you can still improve your self-defense capability by supplementing your *dojo* training with the knowledge base you acquire from reading *High Risk*. ✖

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Jim Wagner uses air guns in his civilian Reality-Based Personal Protection courses. His firearms experience comes from years of military, police, SWAT, dignitary protection, counterterrorism, and Range Safety Officer training and missions. Shown here are several photos of Wagner over the years.

